NATION

Demolish buildings within 15 km of int'l border: Shah

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BUSINESS

Govt to sell ₹ 10,000 cr stake in LIC next month

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SPORTS

India hopes to regain rhythm in series against England

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Eid Al-Adha

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY
wishes its readers a very happy Eid al-Adha. Our office will remain closed on 28 May, 2026, and there will be no edition dated 29 May.

SIR breathes life into fair election: SC backs EC

Says deletion from voter list does not amount to loss of citizenship

Says Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Supreme Court on Wednesday delivered a major ruling upholding the Election Commission's authority to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, stating that the exercise "breathes life" into the constitutional mandate of free and fair elections.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi held that the poll panel is empowered under Article 324 and Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act to undertake such revisions. It said the SIR strengthens the "constitutional imperative of free and fair elections" and ensures the integrity and accuracy of voter lists.

The court also ruled that deletion from electoral rolls does not amount to a declaration of loss of citizenship. It clarified that Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship, and upheld the Election Commission's documentation framework as neither arbitrary nor beyond statutory powers.

It said the EC is entitled to classify documents based on evidentiary value for establishing eligibility, including residence and citizenship-related conditions. It held that the SIR is aimed at addressing large-scale migration, urbanisation and outdated electoral data.

The bench noted that the Commission may conduct a limited inquiry into citizenship only for determining electoral eligibility, without affecting formal citizenship status. It directed that cases of deleted voters where citizenship is in doubt must be referred within four weeks to the competent authority, which must decide after due process and hearing.

Delivering a 124-page verdict, the court said the credibility of elections depends on the accuracy of voter rolls, and sufficient safeguards exist to prevent arbitrary exclusion. It upheld the EC's discretion to design procedures different from routine revisions.

The ruling comes after petitions, including from the Association for Democratic Reforms, challenged SIR in Bihar, alleging it functioned like an NRC-style exercise. The court rejected this, stating the EC acted within constitutional limits. SIR was first implemented in Bihar, where 65 lakh names were removed from voter rolls. While the court has upheld the EC's powers, concerns remain over administrative consequences for excluded voters, including loss of access to welfare benefits, as seen in Bihar. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 5*

What did the petitioners say?

- EC has no power to examine citizenship, which lies exclusively with MHA.
- EC cannot invoke powers to create a new nationwide SIR regime where Parliament has already legislated through the Representation of the People Acts and Rules.
- SIR cannot impose a fresh burden of proof on existing voters.
- Voters can be removed only after a due notice but SIR allows deletion without prior warning.

Vegetable vendor beaten to death over Rs 10 dispute

CHANDIGARH, 27 MAY

A vegetable vendor in Haryana's Karnal was beaten to death on Tuesday, while his daughter sustained injuries, after two men attacked them following a dispute over Rs 10, police said on Wednesday. The 45-year-old vegetable vendor was identified as Sanjay. According to police, two men allegedly paid Rs 200 of a Rs 210 bill, refusing to pay the remaining amount. When the argument escalated into a fight, the accused allegedly attacked Sanjay and his daughter with bricks, a police officer said. He added that Sanjay was declared dead on arrival by doctors at a local hospital. An FIR has been registered, and the accused will be arrested soon, he said. —*PTI*

Pune Porsche crash: Accused celebrating bail video goes viral

PUNE, 27 MAY

A video allegedly showing Vishal Agarwal, father of the minor accused in the Pune Porsche crash case, celebrating his bail with family members has gone viral on social media, triggering outrage online. Rubbishing the viral clip, the family on Wednesday said the video was shot in 2023 and not following his release after the Supreme Court granted him bail in March this year. The apex court granted bail to Vishal Agarwal, who is alleged to have conspired to swap blood samples to shield his son from legal consequences after a fatal accident in 2024. The viral video shows Agarwal dancing with his wife and son at what appears to be a local restaurant while live music plays in the background. —*PTI*

4 in isolation in Gujarat after Ebola symptoms

GANDHINAGAR, 27 MAY

Blood samples from a businessman from Congo and three individuals who came into contact with him have been sent to Pune for Ebola virus testing, Gujarat Health Minister Praful Pansheriya said on Wednesday. The 37-year-old businessman was isolated at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital after he developed a fever. There has been no confirmation of Ebola infection so far. The Gujarat Health Department is screening passengers arriving from Uganda and Congo and at Ahmedabad International Airport in response to an Ebola outbreak there. —*PTI*

GAME OF THRONES

Power breakfast planned: CM keeps K'taka guessing

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah plans to host his cabinet colleagues for a breakfast meeting on Thursday and may also call on the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, amid intense speculation over a leadership change in the State.

The development comes amid reports that Siddaramaiah could resign on Thursday, paving the way for Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to take over under an alleged 2023 "rotational formula" discussed within the party.

Sources said Siddaramaiah, 77, has sought time to meet the Governor, fuelling speculation that he may formally tender his resignation. The Chief Minister, however, refused to comment on Wednesday. "I will speak on it tomorrow," he said, after paying floral tributes at Vidhana Soudha on Jawaharlal Nehru's death anniversary.

According to party sources, the Congress High Command held marathon discussions in Delhi on Tuesday with both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. The meet included senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, KC Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala. Reports suggest the leadership transition issue gained momentum after the government crossed its halfway mark.

Shivakumar, who is in Delhi, has postponed his return but is expected to attend the breakfast meeting at the chief minister's residence. The two leaders had earlier hosted similar breakfast meetings in an attempt to ease tensions over leadership sharing.

Meanwhile, AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said no decision has been taken and no legislature party meeting has been called, urging the media not to indulge in speculation. He said any decision would be made in the interest of Karnataka and communicated officially. Despite this, speculation intensified after Congress MLA RV Deshpande claimed Siddaramaiah has already decided to resign and could step down on Thursday, stating that he had "given his word to the high command". —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 2*

CM Siddaramaiah leaves Vidhana Soudha in B'luru on Wednesday. —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

> **Early elections will definitely happen in the state. No one can stop early elections in Karnataka**
>
> —BY Vijayendra, State BJP President

After U'khand & Gujarat, Assam passes UCC Bill

GUWAHATI, 27 MAY

The Assam Assembly on Wednesday passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill after a marathon debate between the BJP-led NDA and Opposition parties.

Assam has become the first state in the Northeast and the third BJP-ruled state in India to pass such a law, after Uttarakhand and Gujarat.

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, 2026 seeks to establish a single civil legal framework governing marriage, divorce, succession and live-in relationships irrespective of religion. The legislation also exempts Assam's tribal communities from its provisions.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE BILL

- Prohibits polygamy
- Mandatory registration of marriages within 60 days
- Live-in relationships must be registered within 30 days. Failure to do so will attract Rs 10,000 fine and face 3-months' jail.
- Standardised marriage age: 21 (groom), 18 (bride).
- Daughters receive equal property succession rights on par with sons.
- Spouses from all communities must approach a civil court for divorce.

Introduced on May 25 and cleared by the state Cabinet earlier this month, the Bill reflects a key poll promise made by the BJP ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

A government statement said the law safeguards cultural diversity by allowing marriages to be solemnised through various religious or customary practices, including Vedic Bibah, Ahom Chaklong, Saptapadi, Ashirvad, Nikah, Holy Union and Anand Karaj. —*ANI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

A TOUCH OF EID MAGIC

A woman applies henna on the eve of Eid-ul-Adha festival in West Bengal's Murshidabad on Wednesday —*PTI*

Protesters attack ED amid raids on Vijayan

T'PURAM, 27 MAY

ED raids linked to financial dealings between former Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's daughter's firm and a sand mining company triggered violence in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday, along with statewide protests by CPI(M) workers.

ED carried out searches at Vijayan's rented residence with eight central security personnel deployed who were armed. After the raid concluded and officials were leaving, the situation escalated outside the premises.

Protesters, allegedly CPI(M) workers, attacked at least three vehicles carrying ED officials, including one with six officers and a woman official (**in pic**). The vehicles were blocked, pelted with stones, bricks and eggs, and their windshields and mirrors damaged. One driver was injured, after which officials went to Thampanoor police station to lodge a complaint. Earlier during the raid, workers allegedly hurled helmets, plastic bottles and stones at security personnel. The ED action came a day after the High Court dismissed a petition by Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited challenging a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities involving Vijayan's daughter Veena T and her firm Exalogic Solutions.

Police arrested four people. The arrests followed a stand-off outside a CPI(M) area committee office at Palayam, where party leaders, including V Sivankutty, Kadakampally Surendran, and MP John Brittas, were present. Party leaders denied the accused were inside the office and resisted police entry, while officers maintained they suspected the culprits were inside. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

AMID PRICEY ATF

AI, IndiGo to cut 250 daily domestic flights

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Air India, Air India Express and IndiGo are expected to withdraw around 250 daily domestic flights from June amid rising aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and weakening travel demand, a move likely to push up airfares.

Officials said airlines have been hit by multiple challenges following the West Asia conflict that began in late February, including costlier fuel and airspace restrictions, which have sharply increased operational costs.

Air India is reducing 20 to 22 per cent of its domestic flights during June and July, while Air India Express will cut around 10 per cent of its domestic operations in June. IndiGo is expected to reduce 12 to 15 per cent of domestic flights during the September quarter.

—*MAGNIFIC*

The rationalisation is also being attributed to subdued travel sentiment and seasonal demand slowdown.

Air India currently operates around 4,400 weekly flights, including 3,600 domestic and 800 international services.

IndiGo operates nearly 15,400 weekly flights, of which around 13,000 are domestic. A 15 per cent reduction could translate into nearly 2,000 fewer weekly services.

An IndiGo official said the airline had adjusted services in line with the annual seasonal slowdown between mid-June and August, along with softer demand trends.

There was no official comment from IndiGo, Akasa Air or SpiceJet regarding flight rationalisation.

The reduction in services is expected to tighten seat availability on key domestic routes and may lead to higher ticket prices in the coming months. —*PTI*

Singapore court orders 6-month jail term for Byju Raveendran

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

A Singapore court has sentenced embattled edtech founder Byju Raveendran to six months' imprisonment in a contempt of court matter linked to disputes over document disclosure in ongoing proceedings, sources said on Wednesday.

The order has reportedly been pronounced but not yet published.

Raveendran termed the ruling "disappointing" and clarified that the matter was procedural and did not involve findings of fraud, dishonesty or wrongdoing on the merits.

"I have been directed to appear on 15 June, and appeal options are available," he said in a statement.

He added that lenders, including GLAS Trust and Qatar Investment Authority, along with other stakeholders, had nearly finalised a settlement with the "founders and related parties, with only minor issues pending.

"I chose resolution over confrontation," Raveendran said, alleging the matter had been reported in a misleading manner. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 5*

3 DyCMs with AHINDA formula? CM has conditions

Jarkiholi emerges as frontrunner; Parameshwara may get promotion; Yathindra likely in Cabinet

The caste equation in govt formation

Amid reports about a possible Cabinet reshuffle and replacing Kuruba leader (OBC) Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, with Vokkaliga leader DK Shivakumar, the Congress finds itself in a delicate position of having to balance caste representation.

During the 2023 polls, Siddaramaiah's presence helped secure 63 per cent of the Kuruba vote share, while the party secured around 80 per cent of the Muslim vote share, according to Axis My India.

However, the party only got a dismal 24 per cent of the Vokkaliga vote share, according to Axis My India.

HIREKOP RAJAN SAMUEL
BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Amid intense political speculation over the Chief Minister being replaced, sources close to the High Command indicate that the Congress has acceded to several of Siddaramaiah's key demands. These include three Deputy Chief Ministers (DyCM) being appointed.

Sources indicate that they are to be chosen in consultation with Siddaramaiah.

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi is reportedly a frontrunner for one of the DyCM berths. Other names being floated include Home Minister G Parameshwara, Rural Panchayat Development Minister Priyank Kharge, Minister of Large and Medium Scale Industries MB Patil, and Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan.

The decision is seen as a balancing act for the Congress, as it seeks to balance between demands from Dalit, OBC, Lingayat and Muslim communities. For instance, Parameshwara is a prominent Dalit leader, Patil is from the politically prominent Lingayat community, while Khan is from the Muslim community. However, sources said that government may include three Deputy Chief Ministers — two from AHINDA communities and one from a minority community.

Additionally, Siddaramaiah may have asked for a cabinet berth for his son, MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah.

Home Minister G Parameshwara is a potential DyCM under a DK Shivakumar-led government; Satish Jarkiholi, a tall AHINDA leader from North Karnataka, is a candidate for DyCM and the KPCC President, especially after mobilising victories during the recent Bagalkot bypolls; Yathindra Siddaramaiah may get a Cabinet berth as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeks prominent portfolios for his loyalists —SALAR (FILE)

> (Many leaders) met Siddaramaiah and expressed our concern over reports on leadership change. But he remained silent
>
> -HK Patil,
> Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

The High Command repotedly agreed to allocate influential portfolios, like Irrigation and Public Works, to leaders backed by Siddaramaiah.

NEXT KPCC PREZ

Another one of Siddaramaiah's demands includes having a say in the selection of the next Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President. Shivakumar has held the portfolio for six years, and indicated his intention to step down.

Jarkiholi, considered one of the Congress' strongest faces in North Karnataka, is reportedly in talks to take up the mantle.

Political strategists are reportedly planning for the 2028 Assembly elections to be fought under the joint leadership of Siddaramaiah and Jarkiholi. Senior Congress leaders are believed to have taken note of Jarkiholi's organisational abilities and his ideological outreach through campaigns centred on the teachings of Buddha, Basava and Dr BR Ambedkar. Analysts said that Jarkiholi cultivated an image as a secular mass leader with influence among backward classes and minorities. With the BJP led by Lingayat leadership and the JD(S) identifying with the Vokkaliga community, Congress may look to consolidate AHINDA votes under Jarkiholi's leadership.

His work among minority and backward class communities during the Shiggaon and Bagalkot bypolls was also noted by the leadership.

However, Jarkiholi played down the reports. "There hasn't been any specific discussion regarding that yet. It will become official tomorrow, so we just have to wait until."

Interestingly, Jarkiholi has repeatedly stated that he is "not an aspirant for the DyCM post" and instead sought to become the Chief Minister face in 2028. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru police issue Eid traffic advisory

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Bengaluru City Traffic Police have issued a traffic advisory for Thursday from 8am to 12pm. In view of Eid-ul-Adha festivities, a large number of Muslim devotees will gather for mass prayers. Traffic diversions and restrictions will be implemented across key stretches: Bannerghatta Main Road (from Sagar Hospital Junction and Sai Ram Junction to Gurappanapalya Junction), 39th Cross Road (from Gurappanapalya to Reddy Hospital Junction), and Kanakapura Main Road (from Sarakki Signal to KS Layout Junction). To bypass these closures, the police have provided alternative routes. Commuters who would normally drive straight down Bannerghatta Main Road or head toward K.S. Layout should plan to utilise Tilak Nagar, Swagath Junction, East End Main Road, Sarakki Market, and the Banashankari Bus Stand area to reach their destinations. —*Salar News*

Supporters of Chief Minister Minister Siddaramaiah protest outside his Cauvery residence, while Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's fans celebrate across the State on Wednesday —SCREENGRAB

AHINDA group says Cong will face consequences if Siddaramaiah's removed

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

The Karnataka State Federation of Backward Class Communities on Wednesday said the Congress will face consequences if Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is replaced.

Federation President Ramachandrappa said that the Congress came to power because of the support from AHINDA (minorities, backward classes and Dalits) communities. There is no leader of Siddaramaiah's statute in the Congress.

"If the reports that Siddaramaiah's resignation has been sought are true, 70 per cent of the community that has identified itself with the Congress party will come to zero—we will show it in the days ahead," he told reporters in the City.

"Without any reason, if a stalwart like Siddaramaiah, who has no allegations against him, is replaced, we cannot stay silent. We are planning agitation and may begin it tomorrow itself," Ramachandrappa added.

While "our demand is that no change should be made," Ramachandrappa also called on AHINDA legislators to stand by the decision taken by their community leaders. —*PTI*

RaGa not pro-OBC: Bommai predicts Cong's loss in 2028

BENGALURU/ MYSURU, 27 MAY

BJP MP and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said that removing Siddaramaiah – a tall OBC leader - from the Chief Minister post would harm the Congress in the 2028 Assembly Election in the State.

"If Rahul Gandhi removes an OBC leader, it will prove that he is not for the OBCs," Bommai told ANI on Wednesday. "His decision will impact the INDI alliance; the OBC leaders in the alliance will not take this decision kindly."

Bommai noted that Siddaramaiah was the only OBC leader in the South, and Gandhi was removing him for "no reason".

"Whenever a chief minister is removed, it has an effect," Bommai elaborated.

He claimed that the administration had "collapsed" in the State due to the infighting and that development works has stalled.

"I don't think DK Shivakumar has a magic wand to change this. The deterioration which started at the time of Siddaramaiah will continue with Shivakumar. By the end of their term, the govt will be in shambles, and the State will be in a poor condition," said Bommai.

The Haveri MP alleged that "the problem originated the day Siddaramaiah was chosen as the chief minister as it was not a unanimous selection." Bommai said that the "marathon meetings" amid three years of talking about changing power show that "not everything is well within the ruling party".

He didn't think there would be a "smooth transition of power" as members from the Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar camps would assert pressure on the other.

'DALIT MINISTERS SHOULD RESIGN'

Leader of Opposition in State Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy called upon "self-respecting Dalit Ministers" to resign if the Chief Minister post was not given to a member from their community.

Speaking at a press conference in Mysuru, Narayanaswamy said he had nothing against making Shivakumar the chief minister. But the Congress was treating Dalits as a votebank and was not ready to share power with them, he alleged. "The opportunity has arrived" to make a Dalit Chief Minister".

Asked if the BJP would ever make a Dalit member the CM in Karnataka, Narayanaswamy said the decision was left to the High Command. He noted that the BJP had made Dalits Chief Ministers in other states, and would do so in Karnataka when at an "appropriate time". —*Salar with Agencies*

PHOTO: X

3-day mango, jackfruit mela in Mysuru on 29 May

MYSURU, 27 MAY

Joint Director of Horticulture Manjunath SAngadi on Wednesday announced a three-day organic mango and jackfruit fair. Organised by the Department of Horticulture and Karnataka Mango Development and Marketing Board, the fair will begin on Friday at Nexus Centre City Mall, Mysuru. Dozens of mango varieties — Alphonso, Raspuri, Banganapalli, Totapuri, Mallika, Sendura and GI-tagged Kari Ishad among them — will be on sale at the fair. Varieties of ripe jackfruits will also be arriving from Kolar, Rudrakshi, Shivarathri, Ekadashi, and Tubagere. Speaking to reporters, Angadi said the fair aimed to encourage farmers by providing direct marketing opportunities for chemical-free fresh produce. A similar kind mela was also held last year at Bengaluru Lalbagh Botanical Gardens. —*SALAR NEWS*

CM receives socio-economic survey report after delays

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

- The 'caste survey' was completed six months ago, and the report was completed a month ago, but Naik translated it to English, leading to the delay.

The Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission submitted the 'socio-economic and educational survey' report, popularly known as the Caste survey, to the State Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday.

Madhusudan R Naik, Chairman of the Commission, told press earlier that the submission of the report had nothing to do with the political developments in the State.

Noting that it had been nearly six months since the survey which covered 7 lakh people was completed, the former advocate general said the Chief Secretary fixed the time to submit the report.

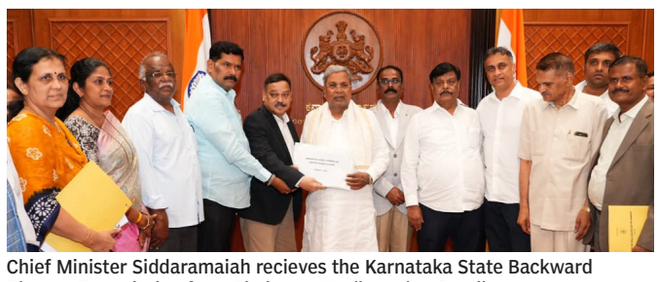
"We were analysing the survey and preparing the report with the help of experts. The report has been ready for about a month. But I had prepared it in English. Since the government's official language is Kannada, it had to be translated, which took time," he said.

Notably, the Commission had planned a meeting on 29 May, but as "some members" could not attend on that date, the meeting was held on Wednesday, Naik said, without specifying who he was referring to.

He added that the Commission is a statutory authority, and that there was no external influence.

"All the members had already agreed to the report that we had prepared earlier. Today's meeting was only to fine-tune it," Naik asserted. "We now have to print, bind and submit the copies to the government."

Naik said that the government was likely to place the report before the Cabinet. "If it accepts it, then it has to be made into a law through a government order. Or it may go before the Assembly for approval." —*PTI*



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recieves the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission from Chairman Madhusudan R Naik —X@SIDDARAMAIAH

JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy visited farmers in Ramanagara and Bidadi on Wednesday —X/@NIKHILKSWAMY

3,700 ryots have objected to Bidadi township: Nikhil

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy said on Wednesday that his party would not let "even an inch" of land be taken from farmers for the Bidadi Integrated Township projects, saying that 3,700 have already submitted dispute applications.

Nikhil, who visited farmers, in Ramanagara and Bidadi, slammed Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar for claiming that 80 per cent of the farmers had consented to the Greater Bengaluru township project in Bidadi. He said that compensation to the farmers would begin in June. The project is set to span nearly 6,000 acres to develop an AI-powered township.

However, Nikhil said that Shivakumar had not listened to the farmers, noting that many had been protesting against the project for 436 days.

"Why has he (Shivakumar) not come to the place and met them (farmers)?" Nikhil hit out. Speaking to farmers, he stressed that their consent was key. The JD(S) X handle also posted videos of people alleging that the project would separate people from their ancestral homes, and that Congress was just seeking money from the project. —*Salar News*

Fire erupts at B'luru hospital; 14 patients evacuated safely

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

Fourteen patients, including some from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), were evacuated safely after a fire broke out at a private hospital in Bengaluru in the early hours of Wednesday, police said. None of the patients or staff sustained any injuries, they clarified.

According to police, the incident was reported at around 3.15 am at Aveksha Hospital on MS Palya Road in Singapura, near Jalahalli.

Fire tenders were immediately rushed to the spot, and the blaze was brought under control, a senior police official added.

The fire is suspected to have started from an electrical cable in the basement duct, causing heavy smoke to engulf parts of the building, he said, adding that the evacuated patients were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Officials from Vidyaranyapura police station inspected the spot, police said, adding that further investigation is underway. —*PTI*

A SIGH OF RELIEF

Ugandan woman in City tests -ve for Ebola

BENGALURU, 27 MAY

A 28-year-old woman from Uganda, suspected of showing symptoms of the Ebola virus, has tested negative, Karnataka Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said on X on Wednesday.

According to officials, the woman — who had arrived from an Ebola-affected region — was moved from a hotel to the State-run Epidemic Diseases Hospital in the City on Tuesday after she developed mild symptoms such as body aches.

Her blood samples were collected and sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune.

The woman was placed in isolation at the hospital for observation and is otherwise in good health, sources said.

"All required medical protocols and precautionary measures were strictly followed in accordance with established public health guidelines," he added.

Rao said the Karnataka Health Department continues to closely monitor the situation and remains fully prepared to take all necessary measures.

In response to Ebola outbreaks in several African countries, the Karnataka Health Department had advised individuals who had recently travelled to affected nations to undergo check-ups and self-observation for 21 days after returning.

The department said those developing symptoms should immediately report to the nearest health facility, while Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) would carry out surveillance activities.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare officials said that no case of the Ebola virus has been confirmed in India so far. —*PTI*

NO MELODY FOR COMMON MAN

Indian Vehicle Drivers Union protests against the Centre over fuel price hike by distributing Melody chocolates at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The chocolates were a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Rome, during which he gifted Italian PM Giorgia Meloni a packet of Melody —MOHAMMED ASAD

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US team to visit India on 1 June for trade talks

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The US team is visiting India from 1-4 June to finalise the details of the interim trade pact and take forward negotiations under the broader bilateral trade agreement on various areas such as market access, non-tariff measures, and customs facilitation, a government official said on Wednesday. India and the US issued a joint statement on 7 February, agreeing on a framework for an interim trade agreement on reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade. The framework reaffirmed the countries' commitment to the broader India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA) negotiations. Following that, the Indian side visited Washington DC on 20-23 April, 2026, for an in-person round of meetings with their US counterparts. —*PTI*

—*ANI*

POCSO case: Cops take minister's son into custody

HYDERABAD, 27 MAY

Police on Wednesday took Bageerath, son of Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar, into custody for questioning in a POCSO case registered against him in Telangana. Bageerath, who was in judicial custody, was brought from Cherlapally Central Prison after a local court granted police two days' custody from 27 May. He was arrested on 16 May following a complaint filed by the mother of a 17-year-old girl, who alleged he was in a relationship with her daughter and sexually assaulted her.Bageerath also filed a counter-complaint, alleging the girl's family pressured him to marry her and threatened false cases and monetary demands after he refused. —*PTI*

2 BJP men booked for distributing liquor in Punjab

HOSHIARPUR, 27 MAY

Two BJP candidates were among five people booked in Punjab's Hoshiarpur for allegedly distributing liquor to influence voters ahead of the Garhshankar Municipal Council elections.

Police said the incident occurred on Tuesday night, hours before polling. The accused include BJP candidates Joginder Kaur and Vijay Kumari, along with three others. A case has been registered under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Representation of the People Act and the Excise Act.According to police, local residents Kripal Ram and Sukhpreet Singh spotted two BJP-flagged vehicles allegedly distributing liquor and carrying voter lists and campaign material. When they objected, one accused allegedly attacked Sukhpreet Singh with a sharp-edged weapon. —*PTI*

Kolkata to host Int'l Yoga Day's main event

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Kolkata will host the main event of International Day of Yoga 2026 on June 21, Union Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav announced on Wednesday. The theme for this year's celebrations will be "Yoga for Healthy Aging", focusing on physical health, mental well-being and holistic ageing. The announcement was made during Yoga Mahotsav 2026 at the Western Group of Temples in Khajuraho, marking the 25-day countdown to the event. Jadhav said yoga represents India's ancient wisdom and plays a key role in preventive healthcare. He also relaunched the Yoga Sangam portal and launched the Yoga Park portal. More than 2 lakh people participated in the 'Yoga 365' free training campaign, he added.—*PTI*

ED searches part of attack on Oppn leaders: Vijayan

Says BJP is misusing central agencies; defends stir by CPI(M)

THIRU'PURAM, 27 MAY

Former Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday alleged that Enforcement Directorate (ED) searches at his premises were part of a "targeted crackdown" against opposition leaders across the country, asserting that such actions would not intimidate him or the CPI(M).

Speaking after ED officials completed hours-long searches at his Bakery Junction residence, Vijayan said, "This is only the beginning. Nobody should harbour the illusion that such actions can intimidate or weaken us," as he raised a clenched fist towards party workers gathered outside.

He alleged that the BJP-led Centre had been misusing central agencies against opposition leaders since coming to power, and claimed the action against him followed the same pattern. He further suggested the searches would give "mental satisfaction" to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging selective silence from the Congress over similar cases involving other parties.

Vijayan said ED officials arrived around 7 am and conducted searches at around 10 premises across Kerala under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). He added that the officers acted on instructions from higher authorities and behaved courteously, while whether any evidence was found was for the agency to disclose.

Addressing protests outside his residence, he said CPI(M) workers had merely expressed their emotions against the ED action and reaffirmed their support.

The ED probe relates to allegations that Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd paid Rs 1.72 crore to Exalogic Solutions, owned by Vijayan's daughter T Veena, between 2018 and 2019 without receiving services in return.

Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala said police were not informed and no assistance was sought, as central forces were used. BJP condemned the protests, with state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar calling violence against ED officials an attack on the rule of law. CPI(M) leader K N Balagopal termed the probe a "politically motivated witch-hunt", while BJP leader V Muraleedharan rejected allegations of political targeting. —*PTI*

Former Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan speaks to the media after ED raids his residence in the CMRL money laundering case —*PTI*

> **The ED can now move strongly forward in the case. Pinarayi Vijayan will be arrested and jailed in the case**
>
> -Shone George, BJP leader

AIADMK factions reunite, rebel MLAs now back EPS

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

After remaining divided for around a fortnight, the AIADMK factions in All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam appeared to patch up on Wednesday, with leaders describing the episode as a "difference of opinion" rather than a split.

The rebel camp said some MLAs, led by SP Velumani and C Ve Shanmugam, had earlier defied party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami and supported TVK government during its confidence vote, but insisted unity had now been restored.

Velumani, along with a group of MLAs including KC Veeramani, met Palaniswami at his Greenways Road residence and later called on Assembly Speaker JCD Prabhakar. However, Shanmugam was absent, though Velumani claimed he was part of the group.

Velumani denied any split within the party and rejected allegations that his faction supported the TVK government for positions of power. He also said the differences were being resolved internally following the party's defeat in the 23 April Assembly election.

He further stated that both factions had withdrawn petitions relating to anti-defection proceedings and had agreed to function as a single unit in the Assembly. Former minister C Vijayabaskar also withdrew his earlier request to be recognised as party whip.

The Speaker said a decision on the matter would be announced on Thursday.

He said the MLAs had now returned to AIADMK as a united group after an appeal by the leadership. During the turmoil, four AIADMK MLAs resigned and joined TVK, reducing the party's strength in the 234-member House from 47 to 43. —*PTI*

VIJAY OPPOSES MEKEDATU PROJECT

TN CM C Joseph Vijay met PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday. The meeting, his first official visit to the capital after assuming office, covered the Mekedatu dam project, fishermen arrests in Lanka and the Tamil invocation song row. Vijay expressed concern over Karnataka's proposed ground-breaking ceremony for the Mekedatu dam across the Cauvery River, saying it violated the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal award and Supreme Court verdict. He also urged a clear directive allowing Tamil Thaai Vaazhthu at government events —*PTI*

FIR against Didi for 'hurting religious sentiment'

KOLKATA, 27 MAY

An FIR has been lodged at the Siliguri Cyber Crime Police Station against former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for hurting religious sentiments, police said on Wednesday.

Advocate Rinki Chattopadhyay Singh said that two remarks by Banerjee had deeply hurt the sentiments and beliefs of "millions of Sanatani Hindus across India and the world." She also alleged that the statements were unconstitutional and provocative, a senior police officer said.

TMC MP RESIGNS FROM PARTY POSTS

Meanwhile, in a letter addressed to Trinamool Congress (TMC) state president Subrata Bakshi, TMC Lok Sabha Member of Parliament (MP) Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar resigned from all organisational posts of the party on Wednesday. The

move came days after she publicly aired her disappointment with party leadership. She continues as the MP of the Barasat Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal.

The previous day, she had attended Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari's administrative review meeting despite party instructions to the contrary.

'30 LAKH BENEFICIARIES OF TMC'S CASH SCHEME INELIGIBLE'

Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday alleged that around 30 lakh beneficiaries under the Trinamool Congress government's 'Lakshmir Bhandar' scheme were ineligible as they were either non-Indians, deceased persons or had their names permanently deleted from the voter list.

Addressing a press conference at Nabanna, Adhikari said nearly 2.20 crore women are currently enrolled under the scheme, but around 30 lakh entries were allegedly invalid. He claimed some beneficiaries had neither applied before an SIR-linked tribunal nor sought citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act for inclusion in electoral rolls.

Adhikari also unveiled a form for the BJP's proposed 'Annapurna Bhandar' scheme, under which eligible women would receive Rs 3,000 per month. He said applications would be verified by officials before enrolment.

According to him, those who have applied under the CAA or appealed before SIR-linked tribunals after adjudication would remain eligible for the new scheme. —*Salar News*

India rejects references to J&K in China-Pak statement

UNITED NATIONS, 27 MAY

India on Tuesday strongly rejected what it termed "unwarranted" references to Jammu and Kashmir in a joint statement issued by China and Pakistan during Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Beijing.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India" and asserted that no other country had the locus standi to comment on the matter.

India also objected to references to projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), some of which pass through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

Jaiswal said New Delhi "resolutely opposes and rejects" attempts to legitimise Pakistan's "illegal and forcible occupation" of Indian territory and added that India's concerns had been conveyed repeatedly to both Islamabad and Beijing. —*PTI*

Cities too seeing demographic changes: MHA

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The impact of illegal migration-driven demographic changes is no longer confined to border regions but has expanded to urban centres, industrial corridors, tribal areas and other socially and economically sensitive zones, the Union government has said.

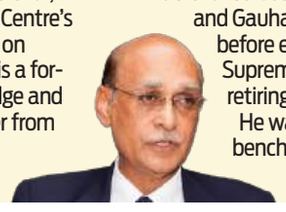
A notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the constitution of a High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC) stated that "extensive challenges" have emerged due to such shifts. Ministry of Home Affairs said the changes are not linked to normal fertility or mortality trends, but to factors such as illegal immigration, irregular population movement and administrative gaps.

The committee has been set up under retired Supreme Court judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar. It was earlier announced by Home Minister Amit Shah. Headquartered in New Delhi, it will include the Census Commissioner, retired IAS officer Durga Shankar Mishra, ex-IPS officer Balaji Srivastava and Dr Shamika Ravi, with a one-year deadline to submit its report.

The panel will examine causes including cross-border migration, economic factors and abnormal settlement patterns, and analyse structural population changes across communities deviating from normal trends. It will also recommend a legal and administrative framework for identification, detention and deportation of illegal immigrants. —*PTI*

WHO IS HEADING THE PANEL?

Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar, appointed to head the Centre's High-Level Committee on Demographic Change, is a former Supreme Court judge and third-generation lawyer from Madhya Pradesh.



Justice (Retd) Naolekar served in the Rajasthan and Gauhati high courts before elevation to the Supreme Court in 2002, retiring in 2008.

He was part of the bench that upheld Afzal Guru's death sentence in the 2001 Parliament attack case. Appointed Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta in 2009, his tenure drew controversy, with Congress calling him a "BJP man". His appointment was challenged over alleged links to then chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Tata, L&T in race for Rs 15K cr AMCA jet project

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Defence Ministry has initiated the selection process for a private sector partner to build India's next-generation fighter jet worth Rs 15,000 crore under the Advanced Multirole Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme, the country's most ambitious indigenous aerospace project.

The Ministry issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to private firms including Tata Advanced Systems, Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Forge. Larsen & Toubro has partnered with Bharat Electronics Limited, while Bharat Forge has an understanding with BEML. State-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited will be involved in the ecosystem, though it has not been shortlisted as a lead bidder.

The programme involves development of five prototypes of the AMCA. The selected private partner will work with the Aeronautical Development Agency

The first AMCA prototype is expected by early 2027, with first flight of the fifth-generation multi-role fighter likely between 2028 and 2029. Serial production is planned for the mid-2030s.

The aircraft is expected to feature super-cruise capability, internal weapons bays and advanced artificial intelligence systems. It will be powered in future variants by 120 km-class French Safran engines made in India.

Designed as a medium-weight stealth deep penetration fighter, the AMCA is expected to compete with global fifth-generation aircraft such as the US F-35, Chinese J-20 and Russian Su-57. It is expected to operate alongside the Tejas light combat aircraft as a core pillar of the Indian Air Force's future fleet. —*PTI*

POLL PROMISE FULFILLED

Oppn terms UCC as 'BJP's political agenda'; Himanta blames Cong

Couples in a live-in relationship must register their relationship under the new UCC rules —*MAGNIFIC*

GUWAHATI, 27 MAY

The Assam Assembly witnessed a sharp political exchange on Wednesday as Opposition parties termed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill as the "BJP's political agenda", while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma defended the legislation and launched a strong attack on the Congress.

Opposition MLAs, including Congress Legislature Party leader Wajed Ali Choudhury, said existing laws already cover issues such as child marriage, polygamy, marriage registration, divorce and alimony, questioning the need for a separate UCC. He said the Bill "complicates" legal processes and represents political motives rather than simplification. He also argued that excluding tribal communities undermines the idea of a uniform law.

Congress MLA Jakir Hussain Sikdar demanded wider consultation, citing a 2018 Law Commission view that no UCC was necessary without stakeholder discussion. He said the Bill was introduced without engaging religious and social groups and urged the Speaker to halt its passage. Another MLA, Nurul Huda, moved an amendment seeking inclusion of all tribes, arguing that exclusion violates constitutional equality.

AIUDF MLA Mazibur Rahman said personal laws already exist under Shariat and warned that fundamental rights cannot be subordinated to Directive Principles.

> **Prices of gas can decrease and increase, but no government can return the dignity of women if it's lost once. If the BJP had not won this time, lakhs of women wouldn't be able to get the shield of security**
>
> -Himanta Sarma, Assam CM

Responding in the Assembly, Sarma said Congress itself had first advocated a UCC in 1925 and later supported it in 1937 through Jawaharlal Nehru, alleging that the party now represents only one community.

He said Congress was opposing the Bill from a "Shariat perspective" and not on secular grounds.

He justified tribal exemption, saying customary laws already ensure gender equality and prohibit practices like polygamy.

He added that the Bill strengthens women's rights in marriage, inheritance and maintenance, and regulates live-in relationships by ensuring legal protection and child rights. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

UP woman, 'lover' arrested for setting husband ablaze

SIDDHARTHNAGAR, 27 MAY

Police have arrested a woman and her 'lover' for allegedly tying her husband to a cot and setting him on fire after a confrontation over their illicit relationship, officials said on Wednesday. The incident took place on 21 May in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharthnagar district, where 28-year-old Lalji Gautam is undergoing treatment for severe burns. Police say his wife, Pooja Gautam, reportedly pursued a relationship with a man called Firoz. Lalji Gautam's discovery of the relationship allegedly led to the attack. The two were arrested from a bus stop after a complaint was registered by Lalji's father. -—*PTI*

3 die after inhaling 'toxic' fumes in septic tank

HAZARIBAG, 27 MAY

Three members of a family died after allegedly being exposed to toxic fumes while trying to get illicit liquor hidden in a septic tank in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district during a police raid. The incident took place at Kud village under the Katkamdag Police Station on Tuesday night. The deceased are Chameli Devi, 50, her son Ravi Kumar, 25, and brother-in-law Madan Sao, 30, a senior officer said. Acting on a tip-off about illicit liquor, police raided Devi's home. She went to retrieve the hidden liquor from the septic tank. Other two followed her and lost consciousness and died. —*PTI*

—ANI

EV catches fire, sets building ablaze in UP

LUCKNOW, 27 MAY

A fire broke out in a residential building in Ghaziabad after an EV car ignited while charging, officials said on Wednesday. No casualties were reported in the incident.Nearly 15 people trapped inside the building managed to save themselves by jumping into a neighbouring building, while others were alerted by shouts for help from other residents. Local fire tenders brought the blaze under control after around 25 minutes. Chief Fire Officer Rahul Pal said the fire team evacuated all residents safely. Pal said a short circuit appears to have started the fire. A detailed probe is underway. —*PTI*

—ANI

Slaughtering of Mithuns banned in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR, 27 MAY

Itanagar Capital Region's Deputy Commissioner Toko Babu banned the commercial slaughter of Mithuns (bovine, the state animal) on Wednesday, citing the Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act, 1989, and the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Babu, who is also the chairperson of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), said a fine of Rs 20,000 will be levied for any illegal slaughter. Babu has been appointed as the head of a team tasked with monitoring such incidents. He also directed the superintendents of police of Itanagar and Naharlagun to deploy personnel as required by APMC members. —*PTI*

Demolish buildings within 15 km of int'l border: Shah

Calls for efforts to deal with infiltration, trans-border crimes

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the authorities to strictly enforce a 'zero tolerance' policy against illegal constructions within 15 km of the country's borders and demolish all such structures that have come up over the years.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has assigned enhanced responsibility to the district magistrates to ensure legal and financial compliance of banking transactions in the border areas by all banks, verify big business establishments, examine their funding sources, track mule accounts and false companies, identify fake Aadhaar cards and control cross-border smuggling, officials said.

Chairing a security review meeting in Bikaner on Tuesday, Shah assessed security related issues concerning the border districts of Rajasthan along the India-Pakistan border.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, during a review meeting on border security and trans-border crimes concerning Rajasthan's districts along the Indo-Pakistan border, in Bikaner. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and others are also seen —*PTI*

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, senior state officials, and the district magistrates and superintendents of police of five border districts – Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Sri Ganganagar and Phalodi – were present at the meeting.

In a statement, the home ministry said the border districts have been directed to carry out an in-depth study of the sources, patterns and networks behind crimes and the drug menace, and to develop lasting solutions so that these problems do not resurface.

Shah stressed formulating a 360-degree security cover for every border district involving citizens, state machinery and security agencies.

The home minister called for strict enforcement of the zero tolerance policy against illegal constructions, particularly within 0 to 15 km of the internal borders, and to demolish all such structures, officials said.

He underscored the importance of a coordinated approach to border management involving the BSF, CBDT, NCB and the state machinery to address issues of infiltration, narcotics smuggling, encroachment, terror financing and other trans-border crimes.

"A review and feedback on these issues will be undertaken again after two months; therefore, the districts will have to ensure result-oriented action," the ministry statement said. —*PTI*

COPS SAVE THE DAY

Goat vs pig: Thane society sees clash over Bakrid sacrifice

MUMBAI/THANE, 27 MAY

A dispute over tying sacrificial goats ahead of Bakrid in a Thane housing society triggered a clash. The matter escalated as some residents, in a counter move, raised slogans, recited the Hanuman Chalisa, and tried to bring a pig into the complex.

Police intervened to pacify both sides and stepped up security, while locals alleged that three people were injured.

The controversy erupted at Srishti Complex in the Poonam Cluster area near Mira Road in Maharashtra's Thane district on Sunday after residents and Hindu organisations objected to the setting up of a temporary shed for sacrificial goats, according to local officials.

Following protests, the temporary structure was dismantled, but tensions escalated after members of the Muslim community allegedly gathered in protest on Monday, and a police complaint was lodged.

Police intervened to pacify both sides, but a scuffle allegedly broke out later in the night.

The situation escalated after residents recited the Hanuman Chalisa and tried to bring a pig, saying they want to perform 'Varaha puja' in protest. Cops had to rescue the pig too. Later, Vishwa Hindu Parishad workers reached the complex, during which a VHP functionary and two others were allegedly attacked with a blade, local sources said.

No case has been registered so far. —*PTI*

Centre plans to move all pleas against transgender law to SC

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Centre on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking to consolidate and transfer all pending challenges against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) (Amendment) Act, 2026, from various high courts to the apex court.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta mentioned the matter before a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justice Joymalya Bagchi seeking an urgent listing of the transfer petitions on Friday.

"We have filed transfer petitions to bring the challenges against the Transgender Amendment Act to this Court," the Solicitor General submitted.

"If the petitions are listed on Friday and notice is issued, we can request the high courts to defer their proceedings," he added.

The law officer said that since multiple high courts are currently seized of the matter, there is a significant risk of "divergent views" and conflicting judicial rulings on the

validity of the federal legislation.

However, the CJI appeared reluctant and said the apex court often benefits from the foundational legal reasoning provided by provincial courts.

"Sometimes we can have the advantage of a high court view as well," the CJI said.

When the law officer reiterated the submissions, the CJI said he "will see".

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) (Amendment) Act, 2026, has come under intense legal scrutiny from among others the LGBTQ+ community primarily over the removal of the concept of "self-identification" of gender. —*PTI*

SC: Expedite trial in Manipur violence

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that the ongoing trial in the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence needs to be expedited and sought a status report from authorities.

"We are of the view that the ongoing trial needs to be expedited. We have asked the CBI and others to provide legal aid counsel who are well-versed in Manipuri to counsel the victims...The status of the ongoing trial must be filed in the next hearing," a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said. The bench noted that according to a SIT report, chargesheets had been filed in 207 cases against more than 400 accused. —*PTI*

Latur doc, teacher held in NEET UG paper leak case

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The CBI has arrested a Latur-based doctor and a physics faculty member at a Pune-based coaching institute in connection with the NEET UG paper leak case, officials said on Wednesday.

The agency arrested Manoj Shirure for allegedly playing a "key role" in facilitating three students, including the son of Shivraj Raghunath Motegaonkar, who runs the Renukai Chemistry Classes (RCC) in Maharashtra's Latur, in getting chemistry questions from NEET paper setter P V Kulkarni, they said.

The agency had already arrested Montegaonkar in the case. The CBI also arrested Tejas Harshadkumar Shah, a physics teacher at Dr Abhang Prabhu Medical Academy (APMA), a coaching centre in Pune.

Shah allegedly received leaked physics questions from NEET UG from arrested accused Manisha Havaldar, the officials said. The total number of arrests made in the paper leak case has reached 13, the officials said. Arrests have been made from Delhi, Jaipur, Gurugram, Nasik, Pune, Latur and Ahliyanagar," a CBI spokesman said. —*PTI*

Tech snag forces US bound AI flight to turn back to Delhi

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

An Air India flight bound for San Francisco returned to New Delhi on Wednesday after developing a technical snag mid-flight, forcing the aircraft to turn back after spending more than eight hours in the air, according to the airline and flight-tracking data.

The aircraft, with around 230 passengers onboard, had been airborne for more than three hours and was flying through Chinese airspace before diverting back toward Delhi.

Flight AI173, operated by a Boeing 777-300ER carrying around 230 passengers, departed Delhi for San Francisco before returning to the Indian capital in line with standard safety procedures, Air India said in a statement.

"The aircraft landed safely and will undergo technical inspection in line with Air India's safety standards," the airline said.

Air India said it was arranging alternative flights for passengers and providing assistance, including refreshments, hotel accommodation and rescheduling options.

The airline did not specify the nature of the technical issue.

Data from the flight-tracking website Flightradar24 showed the aircraft began diverting back to the national capital after being airborne for over three hours, when it was in the Chinese airspace. Air India regretted inconvenience caused to the passengers. It made alternative arrangements to fly them to their destination as soon as possible. —*PTI*

Eid prayers disallowed at Srinagar's Jama Masjid

SRINAGAR, 27 MAY

Authorities on Wednesday refused to allow Eid prayers at the Eidgah and the historic Jama Masjid in the old city here for the eighth consecutive year, besides placing Mirwaiz Umar Farooq under house arrest.

"For the eighth consecutive year, Muslims of Kashmir have been denied the right to offer Eid prayers at the historic Eidgah/Jama Masjid, and I have been placed under house arrest," the Mirwaiz took to X.

He said Muslims of Kashmir are greeted by barricades and restrictions on Eid.

"On the revered and celebratory occasion of Eid, Muslims of Kashmir are greeted with barricades, restrictions, locked gates and intimidation," he said adding that "it is

a systematic assault on our religious identity and fundamental rights that hurts us."

Mirwaiz said it is very unfortunate Kashmiri children are growing up without witnessing spiritually uplifting Eid prayers at the Eidgah. —*PTI*

NHAI u-turn on 'act of god': Pays Rs 1.80 cr in landslide damage

SHIMLA, 27 MAY

A week after describing damage to land and apple trees due to landslides near Dhalli in Shimla as an "act of god", the National Highways Authority of India has changed its stand and agreed to pay Rs 1.80 crore as compensation to the orchard owner for the loss, officials said.

Narinder Singh Rathore had filed a case in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) seeking compensation for the loss of around 440 apple trees. He said he has withdrawn the case after NHAI agreed to pay a Rs 1.80 crore for his loss.

In May 2025, Rathore's orchard was severely damaged due to landslides allegedly triggered by a four-laning project of the NHAI. —*PTI*

HC ACQUITS ASARAM IN GANGRAPE CASE, UPHOLDS LIFE TERM IN POSCO CASE

JODHPUR, 27 MAY

Former self-styled godman Asaram received partial relief from the Rajasthan High Court on Wednesday after it acquitted him of charges related to gang rape and gang penetrative sexual assault on a child under the IPC and POCSO Act, while upholding his conviction for rape of a minor, which continues to carry life imprisonment.

A division bench comprising Justice Arun Monga and Justice Yogendra Kumar Purohit acquitted Asaram of charges under IPC Section 376(D) and Sections 5(G)/6 of the POCSO Act.

The court also discharged him under Section 120(B) of the IPC related to criminal conspiracy.

However, the bench upheld his conviction under IPC Section 376(2)(F), pertaining to rape of a minor, thereby retaining the sentence of life imprisonment awarded by the trial court.

The court directed Asaram to surrender in view of the conviction. he is currently out on temporary bail, which was extended by seven days on Monday.

The High Court also upheld convictions under several other provisions, including Sections 342 (wrongful confinement), 370(4) (trafficking), 506 (criminal intimidation), 509 (insulting the modesty of a woman), 354(A) (sexual harassment) of the IPC, along with Sections 7/8 of the POCSO Act. and 23 of the Juvenile Justice Act.

The bench further upheld his conviction under Section 376 of the IPC and Section 34 of the POCSO Act. —*PTI*

AFRAID OF STALKER

No 24-hr security without proof of threat to interfaith couple: HC

INDORE, 27 MAY

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has refused to grant round-the-clock police protection to an interfaith couple, stating that continuous personal security cannot be ordered merely based on general apprehensions or suspicious activities.

The court made the remarks while dismissing a writ petition filed by a woman and her husband living in Ratlam city on 14 May.

In the petition, the couple cited an attempt by an unknown person to stop their car, a suspicious vehicle loitering near their home, and other incidents, and requested 24-hour police protection and

special nighttime security.

Justice Jai Kumar Pillai of the HC's Indore bench said, "Every writ petition seeking such extraordinary protection must be substantiated by clear proof of threat, rather than general apprehensions or isolated incidents of suspicious vehicles, which primarily warrant regular police patrolling and investigation rather than personal armed guards."

As per the petition, the couple married in 2019 at an Arya Samaj temple in Delhi according to Hindu customs. The woman practised Islam before marriage and converted to Hinduism of her own free will, as per the plea. Soon after the woman informed her parents about the marriage and conversion, the couple began receiving serious threats. She later approached the high court in 2022.

The court directed the Ratlam SP to consider the couple's application as per the law, after which they were provided security. —*PTI*

Rs 1,150 cr worth cocaine seized off Gujarat coast

AHMEDABAD, 27 MAY

The Gujarat ATS and the Indian Coast Guard busted an international trafficking network, seizing 115 kg of cocaine valued at nearly Rs 1,150 crore from a vessel off Mundra port. They also apprehended three foreign nationals, officials said on Wednesday.

The consignment travelled through Latin America, Mexico, the United States and Karachi (in Pakistan) before the cargo vessel 'Europe' anchored near Mundra port in Kutch district, Gujarat's Director General of Police KLN Rao said at a press conference here. One accused said the contraband was loaded onto the vessel in Brazil and hidden in the motor room. Authorities are investigating the narcotics' final destination after Delhi. —*PTI*

Govt exams cancelled in UP over technical glitches

LUCKNOW, 27 MAY

Amid protests by candidates over alleged "technical disruptions," the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) (Central Region) on Tuesday cancelled the 2026 Constable (General Duty) Examination at several centres in Uttar Pradesh.

In a series of posts on X, the SSC said that technical disruptions were reported at one centre each in Kanpur, Prayagraj, Lucknow, Gorakhpur and Muzaffarpur on 25 May (Monday).

"As a result, tests scheduled at these centres were cancelled and affected candidates were rescheduled for subsequent dates," it said.

The SSC plans to complete the examination process for all candidates by 31 May, 2026, it added.

Earlier, candidates staged protests over alleged mismanagement at the Prayagraj examination centre. Police said several candidates allegedly vandalised property inside the premises and demanded cancellation of the examination. They later blocked the a major road, briefly disrupting traffic movement.

There were also charges of question papers being leaked, coming on the heels of similar concerns surrounding the NEET, CBSE exams. —*PTI*

SURVIVAL CRISIS

People gather around a water tanker amid scorching summer heat in New Delhi on Wednesday. The national capital is grappling with water shortage despite Haryana releasing Yamuna water to Delhi, as the water level at Wazirabad barrage remained critically low. While mercury hit 44°C in Delhi, IMD predicted severe heatwave across 15 states and Union Territories. Even Jammu and Kashmir is baking under 40°C. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged citizens to stay hydrated, and not to ignore symptoms such as dizziness, nausea and fatigue, as these could be signs of heatstroke. India is now the hottest country on planet earth, thanks to unplanned concretisation and unscientific deforestation —PTI

BJP will decide who can vote: SIR petitioner Yadav

Yogendra Yadav, one of the petitioners who challenged the SIR exercise by the Election Commission, said on Wednesday that the outcome of the case in the Supreme Court was a foregone conclusion and alleged that the ruling BJP would decide "who can vote and who cannot".

"The news is not that the Supreme Court has today declared the Election Commission's SIR to be constitutional. The real news is that now in this country, the BJP will decide who can vote and who cannot," he said.

He added that parts of the Constitution, which he described as "perhaps the last pillar" protecting democratic institutions, had "broken and fallen today".

The political activist and psephologist sharply criticised the apex court verdict upholding the EC's SIR of electoral rolls, claiming the court moved away from examining the constitutionality of the SIR and "focused on grievance redressal and arbitration".

In a post on X after the judgment, Yadav said he did not go to the Supreme Court to hear the order in the SIR case because, in his view, the outcome was clear long before the formal verdict.

"As a litigant in this case, and as someone who was given the honour of addressing the court, I should have been hopeful, anxious or at least curious. I was not. The case was decided long ago," he wrote.

Yadav, who had challenged the SIR process, argued that the trajectory of the case was settled months earlier when, according to him, the court shifted its focus away from examining the constitutional validity of the exercise.

He said the matter was "effectively decided" when the apex court allowed the Election Commission to proceed with elections in Bihar without first deciding the constitutional challenge to the exercise and without directing corrections to what he termed "glaring defects" in the post-SIR electoral rolls.

Booth Level Officers cross check voter list ahead of Special Intensive Revision, in Ranchi, Jharkhand —PTI

According to Yadav, the continuation of the SIR process during the hearings had rendered the challenge largely ineffective.

"SIR had become a fait accompli," he said, adding that remarks made during the hearings that no one would be allowed to obstruct the exercise signalled the court's approach.

The simple truth is that the verdict has "authorised the disenfranchisement of millions of citizens, at least 59 million so far, that could go up eventually to 100 million", he wrote.

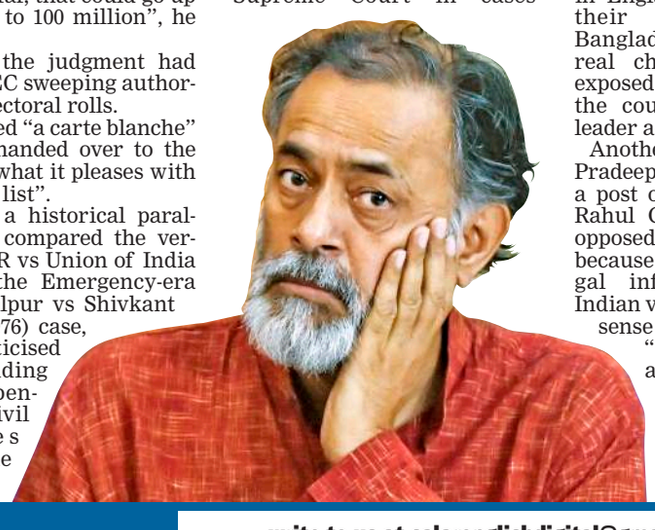
He said the judgment had given the EC sweeping authority over electoral rolls.

He claimed "a carte blanche" has been handed over to the EC "to do what it pleases with the voters' list".

Drawing a historical parallel, Yadav compared the verdict in ADR vs Union of India (2026) to the Emergency-era ADM Jabalpur vs Shivkant Shukla (1976) case, widely criticised for upholding the suspension of civil liberties during the Emergency.

"ADR vs Union of India (2026) is to our times what ADM Jabalpur vs Shivkant Shukla (1976) was to the previous assault on our democracy," he wrote, expressing hope that the judgment would eventually be "recognised for what it was. And reversed." In a separate post, Yadav said the significance of the ruling extended beyond the legal validation of the SIR.

Yadav also shared a question posed by what he described as a "scholar friend" about whether boycotting the Supreme Court in cases involving the executive could be a form of protest and whether publicly advocating such a move might amount to contempt of court. He did not offer an answer in the post.



SC decision complete defeat of Oppn, Rahul must introspect: BJP

Meanwhile, the BJP on Wednesday termed the Supreme Court's verdict on the SIR a "complete defeat" of the Congress and other opposition parties on "moral, political and constitutional" grounds, and asked Rahul Gandhi to introspect.

With the Supreme Court's judgement in the matter, all the allegations that Gandhi levelled against the SIR to cover his "indolence and political incapacity" have failed and stand "completely neutralised", Trivedi added.

"I will ask the Congress, especially Rahul Gandhi, to do introspection after this decision of the court and abandon the use of abusive language," the BJP Rajya Sabha MP told a press conference at the party headquarters here.

Alleging that Gandhi was peddling "lies" with regard to the SIR exercise, Trivedi said the top court's judgement has exposed the "real face" of the Congress.

"With agreement in China, family in Italy, centre for misinformation in American institutions, centre for ideas in England and Europe, and their voters' links to Bangladesh, the Congress' real character also stands exposed before the people of the country now," the BJP leader added.

Another BJP spokesperson, Pradeep Bhandari, alleged in a post on X, "It is clear that Rahul Gandhi and Congress opposed (the SIR) all through because they stood with illegal infiltrators, not with Indian voters. This was in true sense an anti-national act."

"Will Rahul Gandhi apologise today for defaming Indian Democracy," Bhandari asked.

—PTI

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

Suicides in ICE custody reach record levels

Detainees in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement are taking their own lives at a pace unprecedented in the agency's two-decade history, highlighting what experts call failures in care and oversight, according to an investigation by The Associated Press.

At least 10 detainees have died by suicide since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025 and ordered ICE to increase arrests and deportations. There have been seven such deaths since October, already the most in a fiscal year. ICE typically has recorded just one or no annual suicides.

The increased pace of suicides exceeds the growth in ICE's detainee population, and those deaths account for nearly 20 per cent of the 51 people who have died in ICE custody since January 2025.

Department of Homeland Security acting assistant secretary Lauren Bies said suicide deaths in ICE custody remain "extremely rare."

HERE ARE SOME TAKEAWAYS FROM AP'S INVESTIGATION:

Those who died were nearly all Hispanic

Nine of the 10 who died were Hispanic men. One was a Chinese citizen.

They had usually been in ICE custody for less than a month and sometimes only a matter of days.

Among those who took their own lives was a 19-year-old labourer from Mexico, a 27-year-old house-painter from Colombia, and a 36-year-old restaurant worker from Nicaragua. Seven of the 10 had no record of violent crime.

Suicides have happened across ICE's detention network

The deaths have revealed holes in treatment and oversight across ICE's system, where the detained population has spiked by 50 per cent to 60,000 during Trump's second term, AP found.

Five died in centres run by longtime ICE detention partners, CoreCivic and the GEO Group. A sixth died at a camp operated by an inexperienced contractor that ICE has since replaced. Three died in jails run by sheriffs. One died in a federal prison.

GEO Group spokesperson Christopher Ferreira said the company trains staff on suicide prevention.

AP's examination found that ICE detention centres have repeatedly fallen short in ways that violate ICE's standards.

Staff ignored signs of distress, delayed mental health treatment and failed to monitor detainees who were already deemed at risk. They also permitted detainees to have access to materials that could be used for self-harm.

In some cases, distressed detainees were confined in isolation, a situation that can exacerbate feelings of humiliation and helplessness, according to experts.

Three of the facilities where ICE detainees died by suicide have struggled to meet ICE's requirement that detainees receive medical and mental health screenings within 12 hours of arrival, according to inspection reports and jail records.

Experts are alarmed by the increase

Experts said the unprecedented number of suicides is an indication that authorities are failing to oversee the detention of tens of thousands of immigrants swept up in the Trump's aggressive deportation strategy.

"Something is going profoundly wrong from any kind of public health or mental health perspective," said Dr Sanjay Basu, a University of California-San Francisco epidemiologist. "This is one of those alarming, sudden increases."

A death at a Missouri jail highlights problems

Last year's suicide of 27-year-old Brayan Rayo Garzon at the Phelps County Jail in Rolla, Missouri, highlights gaps in how facilities assess, monitor and care for such detainees, experts said.

The Colombia native had been picked up by police in St Louis on a misdemeanour fraud charge and turned over to ICE. The agency sent him to the jail in Rolla.

The jail did not perform an intake screening on Rayo for 35 hours. That's when he began exhibiting laboured breathing, said he was anxious and requested mental health treatment that he did not receive.

Rayo grew ill with Covid-19. The jail twice scheduled him for a routine mental health appointment but they were cancelled each time, first due to staff concerns and then due to his infection.

Rayo was put into medical isolation, which meant he was alone in a cell and could not have his nightly phone call with his mother. On the fourth day, he passed notes in Spanish to English-speaking guards begging to speak with her.

Within an hour, he was found unresponsive. He died the next day. An autopsy determined he took his own life. —PTI

ICE agents confront protesters outside a detention centre in New Jersey on Wednesday. Democrat Senator from New Jersey Andy Kim got pepper sprayed during the protest, many others were tased by ICE –x

Byju's founder denies wrongdoing as edtech giant unravels

A Singapore court sentenced Byju Raveendran, founder of Byju's, to six months in jail for contempt of court over alleged non-compliance with disclosure orders. The entrepreneur said the ruling was "procedural," denied wrongdoing and that he planned to appeal.

The ruling marks the most serious legal setback yet for the founder of Byju's, once one of India's most valuable startups, which has been battling investor disputes, debt litigation and operational turmoil following a sharp post-pandemic downturn.

The court ordered Raveendran to surrender himself to authorities, pay legal costs of Singapore dollar 90,000 (USD 70,500) and produce documents relating to his ownership of Beeaar Investco Pte, a Singapore entity that held shares in an affiliated company.

It was not immediately clear whether Raveendran was in Singapore at the time of the order.

His lawyers said they are contemplating an appeal against the decision and applying for stay of the order.

The case was brought by a subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority, which invested in Byju's during a funding round as the company was grappling with layoffs and mounting financial pressure.

The contempt proceedings add to broader legal battles surrounding Byju's, including ongoing litigation in the United States where lenders are seeking to recover losses tied to a USD 1.2 billion term loan.

In a statement issued after the ruling, Raveendran said settlement discussions with lenders and investors, including GLAS Trust and QIA, were already nearing conclusion and described the latest legal action as an unnecessary escalation.

"The parties have also acknowledged that there has been no wrongdoing on my part or on the part of the other founders," he said.

He said the Singapore ruling was "a procedural contempt of court order" linked to disputes over document disclosure and "not a finding of fraud, dishonesty, or wrongdoing on the merits."

Raveendran added that he had chosen "resolution over confrontation" and said he intended to challenge what he described as a "false and one-sided narrative".

Founded as Think & Learn Pvt Ltd, Byju's became one of India's highest-profile technology startups during the pandemic-era boom in online education, attracting backing from global investors and at one stage reaching a valuation of USD 22 billion before a steep collapse in growth and finances.

> I have always maintained that I acted in good faith and in the best interests of Byju's, its employees, students and stakeholders. I have also placed on record that neither I nor any of the founders personally received any portion of the disputed funds, and that the funds were used for legitimate business purposes
>
> —Byju Raveendran

"The lenders, including GLAS Trust and QIA, as well as other stakeholders, have been in discussions with the founders and other parties. A settlement has been agreed in principle, with only a few residual minor issues left to be finalised between certain parties. I have no role in those remaining issues," Raveendran said, expressing disappointment that the recent Singapore court matter was pursued and reported in a manner that creates a misleading impression about him.

This, especially at a time when all key parties have almost concluded the settlement discussions, he claimed.

He went on to state that he had not been actively contesting several court proceedings in recent months precisely because "the parties were working towards a comprehensive settlement."

"Today's Singapore court matter is a procedural contempt of court order, arising only from disputes over document disclosure in ongoing proceedings - not a finding of fraud, dishonesty, or any wrongdoing on the merits."

Raveendran said he has been directed to appear on 15 June and that appeal options are available.

"Even today, my priority is to support a constructive resolution and avoid saying anything that may affect the ongoing settlement process. However, I cannot allow a false and one-sided narrative to go uncontested and I strongly reject any such incorrect portrayal."

Born in Azhikode, Kerala, Byju was a proficient mathematics teacher. He did not start as a teacher though. He trained as an engineer and then found his love for teaching when he started helping his friends study for the Common Admission Test (CAT).

By 2006, his classes had some 20,000 students filling up auditoriums. This was motivation enough for Byju and his wife Divya Gokulnath to formalise the business.

The set up Think & Learn Pvt Ltd in 2011 in Bengaluru. "BYJU'S – The Learning App" saw the light of day in 2015. Since India was just seeing a smartphone boom, this was the perfect time for virtual learning and there was no coming back.

In 2016, the company became the first Asian startup to receive backing from Mark Zuckerberg's Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. The pandemic made Byju's a go-to app for students.

The expansion strategy, however, is what contributed to its downfall. It relied heavily on large acquisitions via venture capital and debt. The acquired companies struggled to stay afloat, Byju's staff was reportedly pushing hard for sales of costly packages to parents, which included EMI payments. The firm also did not submit audit reports to the government on time. All this damaged investor confidence, and soon financial troubles were reflected in non-payment of salaries of Byju's employees.

In this corporate tragedy, Byju has since lost personal wealth and Byju's its credibility. —*Agencies*

US strike on 'drug boat' in Pacific kills 1

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

The US military launched yet another strike on Tuesday on a vessel suspected of transporting drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing one man and leaving two survivors. Southern Command said it "immediately notified the US Coast Guard to activate the Search and Rescue system for the survivors." The Trump administration says it is at war against the Latin American drug cartels which are allegedly responsible for the scourge of fatal drug overdoses in the US. At least 194 people have been killed since September in the Pacific and the Caribbean Sea, even though the military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs. *—PTI*

Spanish PM in more soup as cops raid party HQ

MADRID, 27 MAY

Spanish police searched the headquarters of the ruling Socialist Party as part of an ongoing investigation into possible financial wrongdoing, the Civil Guard said Wednesday. The raid on the office in central Madrid is another blow to the party of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whaose Socialists have been hammered by a series of corruption scandals. The Civil Guard said that the police were under judicial orders to find material relevant to a National Court probe into accusations of corruption against a former party member involved in a state-run company. Just last week a different court said it was investigating former prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero for alleged influence peddling and other possible crimes tied to a government airline bailout. He has denied any wrongdoing. *—PTI*

'New Assad-era chemical weapons found in Syria'

THE HAGUE, 27 MAY

Dozens of previously undeclared chemical bombs and rockets left over from the regime of former Syrian President Bashar Assad have been found in the country in the past few weeks, said a global chemical weapons watchdog based in The Hague on Wednesday.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said in its May report that it has reason to believe Syria has chemical weapons at an additional 100 sites to the 26 locations the country had claimed when it joined the OPCW in 2013. Following the overthrow of Assad in December 2024, the government under interim-President Ahmad al-Sharaa has pledged to destroy any remaining chemical weapons. —PTI

5 missing people found alive in Laos cave after a week

BANGKOK, 27 MAY

Five villagers stuck in a flooded cave in central Laos for more than a week were found alive, rescuers said Wednesday. Two others are still missing.

The villagers entered the cave in Xaisomboun province on 19 May, but heavy rain triggered flash flooding that blocked the exit and trapped seven people, according to Lao and Thai rescue teams. Videos showed rescuers cheering and hugging each other in joy after the villagers were discovered.

There has been no official confirmation on why the villagers went into the cave. However, a senior member of the rescue team has said that the cave was frequented by local residents looking for gold, despite warnings by authorities. —PTI

US war unlikely to resume: IRGC

Iran's new MoU seeks US forces out: Hormuz to be managed with Oman

TEHRAN, 27 MAY

Iranians celebrate Eid al-Adha, which marks the end of annual Hajj pilgrimage, on Wednesday —TASNIM NEWS

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said that the possibility of returning to war with the US was "low" as Tehran floated a new peace proposal that seeks to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to pre-war levels within 30 days while the US would withdraw military forces from Iran's vicinity and lift its naval blockade.

"The possibility of war is low because of the enemy's weakness. The armed forces are lying in wait with full magazines," Mohammad Akbarzadeh, Deputy Political chief of the IRGC's navy, was quoted as saying by Tasnim News Agency. "Do not doubt that we will turn the area from Chabahar to Mahshahr into a graveyard for aggressors."

The comments come shortly after the US said it carried out "defensive" strikes on Iran, where at least four IRGC members were killed.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also told state media that it was now an economic war. "The main field of confrontation today is the economy and people's livelihoods,"

Meanwhile, Iran's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) said included a US commitment to lift the naval blockade on Iran and withdraw its forces from the Gulf region. Deputy Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Bagheri, who travelled to Moscow, said that Iran's highly enriched uranium was "not on the agenda" for talks.

Iran state media also said that the Strait would be jointly managed by Iran and Oman.

However, the White House appeared to outright reject the proposal, calling the MoU "a complete fabrication" on X. However, White House assistant press secretary Olivia Wales then said talks were proceeding "nicely".

Later, US President Donald Trump said Iran "just wants to make a deal".

"We're not satisfied with it, but we will be. We will be," Trump told reporters ahead of a cabinet meeting at the White House. "Either that, or we'll finish the job".

Trump's Cabinet meeting is seen as an attempt to project confidence that he's closing in on a deal that will reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

It all comes to a head just as the midterm elections to determine control of Congress come into focus and as Republicans worry that rising costs and fuel prices are darkening the American electorate's mood. *–Agencies*

Graham: Pak's role as mediator problematic

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Pakistan's role as a mediator is "problematic" after Pakistani Defence Minister Khwaja Asif said he is not on favour of Islamabad joining the Abraham Accords, which deal with establishing diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Muslim nations.

"It has been apparent to me for quite a while that Pakistan as a mediator is more than problematic. Their animosity towards Israel is long standing," Graham stated on X.

"It is undeniable that Iranian military aircraft are being housed on Pakistani air bases, and past rhetoric from the highest Pakistani officials against Israel is disturbing. As to the Defence Minister's comments about the Abraham Accords, saying that Pakistan would never join because they don't trust Israel: The clip may be a year old, but I fear the sentiment is fresh," the South Carolina Senator said.

Asif said that Pakistan would not recognise Israel until an independent Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders is established. *—PTI*

Israel, Hezbollah clash on the Litani River as IDF marches forward

BEIRUT, 27 MAY

Israel's military clashed with the Iran-backed militant Hezbollah group on Tuesday along the Litani river in southern Lebanon, as Israeli troops pushed farther north days ahead of talks in Washington between Lebanese and Israeli delegations.

The Litani river has been a de-facto boundary in Lebanon, with large areas to the south under Israeli military control despite the ceasefire that has been in place for over a month.

Israel in recent days has intensified strikes in the city and province of Nabatiyeh, just north of the river. On Tuesday, it warned city residents to leave.

In eastern Lebanon, Israel struck an area near the Qaraoun Dam, the country's largest along the Litani river. The Litani River Authority said there was no direct damage to the dam.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it launched several rocket, artillery and exploding drone attacks on Israeli troops and vehicles mobilising along the river toward the Nabatiyeh villages of Yohmor al-Shaqif and Zawtar al-Sharqieh. Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said the militant group repelled attacks along the river banks. *—PTI*

Israel struck an area near the Qaraoun Dam on the Litani River, but there was no direct damage reported —SCREENGRAB

7 Oct 'architect' among 3 killed by Israel

DEIR AL-BALAH, 27 MAY

Palestinians offer Eid al-Adha prayers beside the ruins of a mosque in Khan Younis destroyed by Israeli bombardment, on Wednesday —PTI

On the eve of Eid al-Azha, Israel strikes on Gaza City killing at least three people, including the "one of the architects" of the 7 October attack. At least 12 others were injured in the strikes, which come over a week after Israel said it the previous head of Hamas' military wing, Izz al-Din al-Haddad.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said that strikes killed Mohammed Odeh, who succeeded al-Haddad.

There was no immediate comment from Hamas. The bodies of the dead were taken to Gaza's Shifa Hospital, which confirmed the deaths.

Odeh reportedly served as the head of Hamas's intelligence staff during the 7 October attack, where some 1,200 people were killed and took 250 others hostage. Israel responded by a brutal bombing campaign over two year that has killed at least 72,700 Palestinians, and injured thousands more. The ceasefire that was reached in October, 2025, remains fragile, with Israel killing at least 880 people since then.

Notably, the strikes that killed Odeh came on the eve of Eid al-Azha, normally a joyous time of family gatherings and large meals, but was subdued again in Gaza where the vast majority of people remain displaced and live in tents or temporary shelters. *—Agencies*

Mohammed Odeh —WIKIPEDIA

Bangladesh seeks new IMF programme

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

Bangladesh has requested a new IMF-supported programme, the multilateral financial organisation said, expressing commitment to support Dhaka achieve long-lasting financial stability.

"The Bangladeshi authorities have requested a new IMF-supported programme. IMF staff are in discussions with the authorities on their reform agenda and policy priorities," Ivo Krznar, Mission Chief for Bangladesh at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), said in a statement on Tuesday.

During recent meetings with IMF officials, Bangladesh has conveyed that the existing IMF programme was adopted under a different economic and policy context, and subsequent domestic developments, changing global economic conditions and external uncertainties had created challenges in implementing some reforms.

Bangladesh officials said the government is wants to pursue a realistic and phased reform agenda that aligns with the country's current economic realities. A new government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rehman assumed office in February after Bangladesh held its first polls after the uprising against then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in 2024. *—PTI*

WHO SAYS NO VACCINE YET FOR NEW EBOLA STRAIN, RUSSIA SAYS IT MADE ONE

MOSCOW, 27 MAY

Doctor Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated on Wednesday that there was currently no vaccine to the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) even as the Russian Embassy in South Africa claimed that Russian scientist had developed a vaccine that could work against the rare strain.

At present, no vaccines or specific treatments have been approved by the WHO to prevent or treat Ebola disease.

Ghebreyesus, in a post on X, also urged warring parties in the conflict-ridden DRC to allow to allow medical workers access to its Ituri province due to the Ebola outbreak. He said "humanitarian access" is vital to control the outbreak. The WHO has already declared the outbreak to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Meanwhile, Canada said on Tuesday that travellers from Ebola-affected regions will be required to self-isolate for 21 days. Immigration authorities are also temporarily suspending decisions on applications from Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. *—Agencies*

NASA plans a $20B permanent moon base by 2028

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

After a successful lunar fly-around, NASA has announced three missions to the moon as part of efforts to establish a permanent base on the earth's natural satellite.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman unveiled the USD 20 billion project on Tuesday.

NASA plans to send astronauts in 2028 under the Artemis-III mission. Ahead of that, NASA has announced three Moon Base missions to test technologies. The first mission, using Blue Origin's Blue Moon Mark 1 Endurance lander, will deliver equipment to study the moon's surface and reduce risks for future crewed landings.

The second mission will use Astrobotic's Griffin lander to transport cargo, including Astrolab's FLIP rover, aimed at improving lunar mobility.

The third mission will carry Lunar Vertex project to study mysterious lunar swirls, along with payloads from the European and Korean space agencies. The second phase from 2029 to 2032 will focus on developing permanent infrastructure such as a power grid. The final phase aims for continuous human presence with regular crew rotations. *—PTI*

1 killed, 9 feared dead in US chemical tank blast

LONGVIEW, 27 MAY

A massive chemical tank holding nearly a million gallons of a highly corrosive liquid imploded and collapsed on Tuesday at a Washington paper mill, killing at least one worker and leaving nine others unaccounted for with no hope for rescue, authorities said.

Another nine people were injured, some severely, in the spill at Nippon Dynawave Packaging Co in Longview. The cause was unclear.

That recovery effort would not resume until Wednesday morning, when emergency responders planned to work on stabilising the collapsed tank, which still had about 90,000 gallons of a chemical brew known as "white liquor" inside, and then search for the missing, Goldstein said.*—PTI*

China executes man for poisoning tycoon linked to 'Three-Body Problem'

TAIPEI, 27 MAY

Chinese authorities have executed a man convicted of using poison to kill a billionaire gaming tycoon over a professional dispute, local media reported on Tuesday.

Xu Yao was found guilty of killing Lin Qi, the founder of the Shanghai-based Yoozoo Games, which holds the film adaptation rights for the blockbuster science-fiction trilogy known by the title of its first book, 'The Three-Body Problem.'

Xu, the former head of a subsidiary of Yoozoo Games, poisoned Lin in 2020 over being sidelined by the founder shortly after Xu helped his superior land a Netflix deal for the sci-fi trilogy.

Xu was convicted in 2024, and Shanghai business magazine Yicai Global and other outlets reported he was executed 21 May.

Lin's company confirmed the execution in a statement Tuesday on the Weibo social media platform.

Yoozoo Games and the Shanghai High People's Court did not comment. *—PTI*

TO CURB GOVT 'LEAKS'

US govt workers to sign NDAs?

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

The Trump administration is proposing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for US government workers to curb leaks to the press.

The US Office of Personnel Management, or OPM, published a draft of the proposed agreement for new and current federal workers with a notice that says media leaks "risk … weakening trust within and among Federal agencies."

The form is thus meant to "document Federal employees' acknowledgment of, and agreement to comply with, current legal obligations to safeguard non-public, confidential, or proprietary information," it added.

The Trump administration has said disclosures to the media ahead of the US raid in Venezuela risked US lives.

Experts say the agreements expand on those typical for workers handling sensitive information and could draw legal challenges.

"OPM will pressure agencies to make the NDA mandatory and then fire employees who refuse to sign it," asserted Everett Kelley, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees.

He accused the administration of trying to get rid of "career employees and replace them with loyalists who won't speak out".

"Federal employees do not surrender their First Amendment rights when they accept federal employment, and the public has a right to know about this administration's abuses," Kelley said. *—Agencies*

Biden sues DoJ over release of transcripts to biographer

WASHINGTON, 27 MAY

Former US president Joe Biden on Tuesday sued the Justice Department to block the release of audio recordings and transcripts of interviews he gave to ghostwriter Mark Zwonitzer, arguing that disclosure would violate his privacy rights.

The lawsuit, filed in a Washington federal court, came after the Justice Department planned to release the materials to Congress and the conservative Heritage Foundation. Biden's lawyers said the records involved private conversations conducted at his home in 2016 and 2017 while Zwonitzer worked on Biden's memoirs.

The files were reviewed by special counsel Robert Hur during an investigation into Biden's handling of classified documents from his time as senator and vice president. Hur's report questioned Biden's memory and mental sharpness but concluded there was insufficient evidence to pursue criminal charges.

Biden's legal team argued that the Justice Department had a duty to protect information obtained during criminal investigations. *—PTI*

Rupee edges up to 95.68 amid hope for US-Iran deal

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

The rupee settled on a flat note on Wednesday, higher by 2 paise at 95.68, weighed down by elevated crude oil prices as renewed US strikes dimmed investor's hopes of a US-Iran peace deal. The rupee opened at 95.60 against the US dollar, and touched an intra-day low of 95.79. At the end of Wednesday's close, the rupee was quoted at 95.68, down 2 paise from its previous closing. On Tuesday, the rupee depreciated 44 paise to close at 95.70 against the US dollar. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee are scheduled to meet between 3 June and 5 June, with a focus on whether the RBI will prioritise currency stability alongside inflation. —*PTI*

Gold, silver prices slide globally & domestically

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Gold prices declined by Rs 1,100 to Rs 1.61 lakh per 10 grams on Wednesday as investors assessed the impact of continued US-Iran tensions and rising safe-haven demand for the dollar. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell Rs 1,100 to Rs 1,61,300 per 10 grams, against Tuesday's closing price of Rs 1,62,400. Silver also weakened, falling Rs 3,300 to Rs 2,69,700 per kilogram. The white metal had settled higher at Rs 2,73,000 per kg in the previous session. In the international markets, spot gold fell 1.03 per cent to USD 4,461 per ounce, while silver also declined nearly 3 per cent to USD 74.96 per ounce. —*PTI*

Online ITR-2 filing enabled for AY27

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday enabled online filing of ITR-2 for 2026-27 on the e-filing portal. ITR-2 is filed by individuals and HUFs who do not earn any income from business or profession, but have receipts from capital gains. The department had, on 15 May, enabled online filing of ITR-1 and ITR-4, which are filed by small and medium taxpayers, for the assessment year 2026-27. These forms for filing ITRs for income earned in the 2025-26 fiscal were notified on 30 March. The last date for filing income tax returns by individual taxpayers in ITR-1 and ITR-2 is 31 July 31, while for non-audit taxpayers filing ITR-4, is 31 August. —*PTI*

ONGC Q4 net profit up by 53% to Rs 13,678 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 13,678 crore in Q4FY26, up 53 per cent from the same period last year. For FY26, consolidated net profit rose 30 per cent to Rs 49,793 crore. Standalone net profit stood at Rs 6,650 crore in the March quarter and Rs 32,894 crore for the full year. The company announced a total FY26 dividend of Rs 13.25 per share, with a payout ratio of around 51 per cent. ONGC said subsidiaries HPCL, MRPL, OVL and OPaL delivered strong performance improvements. The company also highlighted progress in offshore gas projects, including rapid monetisation from the Daman Upside Development Project. Projects worth Rs 33,075 crore are under way in the Western Offshore region. —*ANI*

Govt to sell ₹10,000 cr stake in LIC next month

Surging crude costs push concerns over India's import bill

MUMBAI, 27 MAY

The government is likely to begin a proposed stake sale in Life Insurance Corporation of India that could raise up to Rs 10,000 crore.

The Centre plans to divest around 2 per cent stake in the state-run insurer through a share sale to institutional investors in late June or early July, revealed a Bloomberg report. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management is reportedly working with Goldman Sachs, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, BNP Paribas and IIFL Capital Services to manage the transaction.

LIC shares fell nearly 3 per cent on Tuesday amid reports of the proposed sale and were trading at Rs 831 apiece around noon.

The government currently holds 96.5 per cent stake in LIC and has until May 2032 to meet the Securities and Exchange Board of India's minimum 25 per cent public shareholding norm. India had earlier sold a 3.5 per cent stake in LIC during its record Rs 21,000 crore initial public offering in May 2022, with shares priced at Rs 949 each.

The proposed offering is expected to be among the few large equity deals next month as markets grapple with the economic impact of tensions in Iran, rising crude oil prices and concerns over India's import bill.

The Centre reportedly plans to divest around 2 per cent stake in LIC through a share sale to institutional investors in late June or early July this year –*PTI*

LIC CEO and MD R Doraiswamy on Wednesday said that the insurance sector may witness some moderation if Iran war crisis persists for a longer period, as it could reduce people's income levels.

Meanwhile, this development comes shortly after LIC reported a 23 per cent rise in quarterly profit, aided by strong group business growth and sustained momentum from earlier tax cuts.

LIC's board has also approved a 1:1 bonus issue, with 29 May fixed as the record date for shareholder eligibility. Opposition parties, led by the Congress, have previously criticised the government's LIC disinvestment plans, calling them an attempt to "sell family jewels" to bridge fiscal gaps. They have also alleged misuse of policyholders' funds to support select corporate groups, including the Adani Group — claims denied by both the government and LIC. —*Salar News*

OVERSUBSCRIBED ON FIRST DAY

Govt starts sale of 2% stake in Coal India

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Institutional investors on Wednesday lapped up shares offered in the government's Offer for Sale (OFS) in Coal India Limited, with the issue getting oversubscribed on the first day.

Non-retail investors bid for around 11.52 crore shares, more than twice the base issue size reserved for them, at an indicative price of Rs 417.62 per share by 1410 hrs. Bidding was scheduled to continue till 3.30 pm.

The strong response is expected to prompt the government to exercise the greenshoe option in the OFS.

The Centre is divesting up to a 2 per cent stake, or 12.32 crore shares, in Coal India at a floor price of Rs 412 per share, aiming to raise around Rs 5,000 crore. The offer comprises a base sale of 1 per cent equity and an additional 1 per cent oversubscription option.

The floor price represents nearly a 10 per cent discount to Coal India's Tuesday closing price of Rs 458.25 on the BSE. Shares of the company were trading at Rs 451.50 on Wednesday, down 1.47 per cent.

Retail investors and eligible employees will bid on 29 May, while markets remain closed on 28 May for Bakrid.

Following full subscription, the government's stake in the state-owned coal miner will reduce from 63.13 per cent to 61.13 per cent.

- Institutional investors on Wednesday lapped up shares offered in the government's Offer for Sale in Coal India Limited, with the issue getting oversubscribed on the first day.

The Coal India OFS is the second PSU stake sale in FY27 after the government raised Rs 2,266 crore through the sale of an 8.08 per cent stake in Central Bank of India last week. —*PTI*

SC junks Rs 202 crore fine on Amazon by CCI

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a June 2022 order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) in a case involving US-based e-commerce giant Amazon. NCLAT had earlier rejected Amazon's appeal against an antitrust suspension of its investment deal with Indian retail conglomerate Future Group.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta also set aside the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) December 2021 order, which had levied a Rs 202 crore penalty on Amazon and suspended its deal with Future Group.

The Court also granted relief to the US firm, directing authorities to refund any amount deposited by Amazon within the next eight weeks, along with 6 per cent annual interest. It further said that if the refund is delayed, the interest rate would increase from 6 to 9 per cent per annum.

Further, any unpaid amount after the eight-week deadline will carry a 9 per cent simple annual interest until all refunds are paid.

The dispute arises from Amazon's Rs 1,431 crore acquisition for 49 per cent stake in Future Coupons in 2019. Future Coupons, in turn, held shares in Future Retail. In December 2021, the CCI suspended its earlier approval of the transaction.

The regulator alleged that Amazon had failed to disclose that the Future Coupons deal and related agreements were a part of a singular integrated transaction. —*ANI*

HDFC BIGGEST LAGGARD

Mkt down for 2nd day; BSE down 142 pts

MUMBAI/DELHI, 27 MAY

Stock markets closed lower for the second consecutive day on Wednesday as investors remained cautious amid conflicting geopolitical signals from West Asia and fresh foreign fund outflows.

BSE Sensex declined 141.90 points, or 0.19 per cent, to settle at 75,867.80. NSE Nifty skidded 6.55 points, or 0.03 per cent, to end at 23,907.15. Sensex had dropped 479.26 points and Nifty 118 points on Tuesday.

HDFC Bank was the biggest laggard among BSE Sensex firms, declining nearly 3 per cent on Wednesday amid reports that the bank's audit committee had initiated a formal internal vigilance investigation into payments totalling Rs 45 crore to a Maharashtra government agency.

At the NSE, HDFC dipped 2.59 per cent to end at Rs 758.65. Following the decline, the bank's market capitalisation dropped by Rs 31,331.59 crore to Rs 11,67,811.80 crore.

Overall, Sensex closed lower at 75,867.80, with 20 constituents ending higher and 10 with losses. It hit a high of 76,224.68 and a low of 75,748.21, gyrating 476.47 points. Sensex had dropped 479.26 points and Nifty 118 points on Tuesday.

Power Grid, Eternal, NTPC and Tata Steel were the major gainers. Among 30 Sensex firms, Infosys, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, and ICICI Bank were also among the major laggards.

Sector wise Capital Goods and Power both notably soared over 3 per cent.

Meanwhile, Brent crude dropped 3.24 per cent to USD 96.35 per barrel. Stock and forex markets will remain closed on Thursday for Bakri Id. —*PTI*

Crude oil price falls over 3%

Crude oil prices fell over 3 per cent in futures trade on Wednesday amid signs of diplomatic engagement between US -Iran, despite ongoing Gulf tensions.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for June delivery declined Rs 274, or 3.04 per cent, to Rs 8,740 per barrel in 11,539 lots. Globally, Brent crude fell 2.31 per cent to USD 94.44 per barrel, while WTI crude dropped 3 per cent to USD 91.14.

Kotak Neo said investors are balancing tentative diplomatic progress against geopolitical risks.

Railway Ministry approves first indigenous hydrogen fuelled train

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Indian Railways has approved a 10-car hydrogen fuel cell-based trainset for the Jind–Sonipat section of Northern Railway, in a move that supports India's clean energy and net-zero carbon emission goals. The Jind–Sonipat section in Haryana has been selected as the pilot route.

Powered by a 1,200 kW hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system, it will have a maximum speed of 75 kmph and is set to begin services soon, the Ministry of Railways said.

The ministry said the technology "generates electricity using hydrogen, with water vapour as the only emission," making it "a clean alternative to fossil fuel-based traction systems."

An indigenous hydrogen storage and refuelling facility has been established at Jind, which has received a licence for compressed hydrogen storage and dispensing. Indian Railways has also established a suite of RDSO-approved standard operating procedures for the trainset, its fuelling plant, and the Shakurbasti maintenance facility. The move positions India alongside countries such as Germany, Japan, China and the US that are exploring hydrogen railway transportation. —*ANI*

–*X*

RBI TO AUCTION ₹28,000 CRORE GOVT SECURITIES

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct an underwriting auction for the sale and re-issue of government securities worth Rs 28,000 crore on Friday through RBI Core Banking Solution (e-Kuber system) between 9.00 am and 9.30 am," the RBI said.

The RBI has set the underwriting commitments for the upcoming auction of two government securities. For the 6.68 per cent GS 2040—with a notified amount of Rs 17,000 crore—both the Minimum Underwriting Commitment (MUC) and the Additional Competitive Underwriting (ACU) minimum bidding commitment per Primary Dealer are fixed at Rs 405 crore. For the 7.43 per cent GS 2076 — with a notified amount of Rs 11,000 crore—both commitments stand at Rs 262 crore per Primary Dealer. —*ANI*

Senco Gold Q4 net profit jumps 151% to ₹157 cr

KOLKATA, 27 MAY

Senco Gold Limited reported a 151 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 157 crore for the quarter ended March 2026, driven by robust wedding season demand, higher gold prices and strong traction in its old gold exchange programme.

For FY26, the company posted record revenue of Rs 8,430 crore, up 33 per cent year-on-year, while annual profit surged 261 per cent to Rs 574 crore. It is India's leading jewellery retailers and the largest organised jewellery player in eastern India,

Headquartered in Kolkata.

The jewellery retailer had posted a profit after tax of Rs 62 crore in the corresponding quarter last year.

Revenue from operations during the January-March quarter rose 45 per cent to Rs 1,997 crore from Rs 1,378 crore a year earlier, while EBITDA more than doubled to Rs 274 crore from Rs 127 crore. EBITDA improved to 13.7 per cent from 9.2 per cent.

The company said Q4 retail sales reached an all-time high of Rs 1,731 crore, up 35 per cent year-on-year, supported by a well-spread wedding season, Valentine's Day gifting demand and continued growth in the old gold exchange programme.

Despite the strong earnings, Senco Gold shares fell 5.3 per cent on Wednesday to an intraday low of Rs 330.80. The stock has declined 6 per cent over the past year. —*PTI*

Centre clears ₹25,530 cr SARTHAK-PDS scheme

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, approved a Rs 25,530 crore umbrella public distribution system (PDS) scheme on Wednesday.

Two existing schemes are integrated under the new "Scheme for Assistance in Ration Transport and Handling-Income with Automation in PDS" (SARTHAK-PDS), to run till 31 March 2031. Reaffirming the Centre's commitment for food security through access to quality food grains.

Several states struggled to cover transport costs to ration shops, this scheme is aimed to help hile improving pay for foodgrain sellers.

The scheme is seeking to reduce leakages, improve grievance redressal and delivery of subsidised food grains to over 81.35 crore beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, , said SARTHAK-PDS will include "real-time monitoring, AI analytics, State Command Control Centres for data-driven oversight" along with a "unified databases" to improve transparency and efficiency in India's food distribution network. —*ANI*

DOMESTIC REPORT

West Asia crisis to raise prices of daily goods

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

The sharp rise in global commodity and energy prices triggered by the West Asia conflict is extending beyond crude oil and could soon make everyday consumer goods costlier in India, according to Crisil's latest Quickonomics report.

The report warned that manufacturers are facing a rapid increase in input costs - ranging from crude oil and gas to copper, aluminium, plastics and chemicals - while the prices they charge consumers have not risen at the same pace yet.

Crisil said its Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based input-output ratio crossed the 1.0 mark in April 2026 for the first time in 44 months, signalling that companies are now witnessing input costs rising faster than output prices. "The ratio stood at 1.02, driven by a 6.2 per cent on-month rise in input prices, while output prices increased a modest 0.7 per cent," the report said.

–*PTI*

This indicates that companies are paying significantly more to manufacture products, but have so far passed on only a limited portion of those costs to consumers.

The report linked the sudden rise in costs to the ongoing West Asia crisis and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, saying the disruption has widened the inflation shock beyond oil markets into broader industrial supply chains.

The report highlighted that the pressure is no longer limited to fuel. Prices of key industrial inputs rose sharply in April, including crude oil-linked products; across the sector metals and gas-related inputs such as automobiles, consumer appliances, electronics, construction, packaging, pharmaceuticals and textiles. —*ANI*

Sooryavanshi falls short of Chris Gayle's record

CHANDIGARH, 27 MAY

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi fell just short of the fastest IPL century in his maiden appearance in an IPL 2026 Playoff match against Sunrisers Hyderabad in New Chandigarh on Wednesday. Sooryavanshi fell for 97 in 29 balls. If he had reached the three-figure mark off his dismissal delivery, it would have been one ball faster than Chris Gayle's 30-ball century for Royal Challengers Bengaluru against Pune Warriors India in 2013.He was ultimately dismissed caught at third man off the bowling of Praful Hinge. His innings contained five fours and 12 sixes.During his stunning knock, he also moved past Gayle's record for the most sixes in an IPL season. Gayle had hit 59 in the 2012 season, while Sooryavanshi now has 65 in 2026.He still has the second and third-fastest tons in IPL history.—*PTI*

India hopes to regain rhythm in series against England

India's preparations for the T20 WC have been a mixed bag

CHELMSFORD, 27 MAY

India will look to regain consistency and finalise their combination in the final dress rehearsal for next month's women's T20 World Cup when they take on hosts England in a three-match series starting here on Thursday.

With the global event set to begin on 12 June, the tour assumes added significance for Harmanpreet Kaur's side, which has shown flashes of brilliance over the past year but has struggled to maintain momentum consistently.

India's preparations for the T20 World Cup have been a mixed bag. They began strongly with a commanding 5-0 clean sweep over Sri Lanka at home last December before scripting history in Australia by clinching a 2-1 T20I series victory, their first bilateral series win there in a decade.

However, the momentum dropped during the subsequent South Africa tour, where India endured a disappointing 1-4 defeat in conditions that exposed several concerns ahead of the marquee tournament. The batting lacked consistency, the middle order struggled to finish games, and the bowling attack failed to deliver regularly in crunch moments as India looked out of rhythm for most of the series. The England series thus allows India to work on these aspects before their opening T20 World Cup match against Pakistan on 14 June.

Renuka Singh Thakur, Kranti Goud and Arundhati Reddy are expected to share the pace-bowling responsibilities, while the team management could also look at giving rookie Nandini Sharma some game time after the youngster impressed with her fast-bowling skills in the Women's Premier League. India will also draw confidence from their tour of England last year when they secured their first-ever bilateral T20I series victory on English soil with a 3-2 triumph over the hosts. England, on the other hand, head into the series after a dominant showing against New Zealand but will miss regular skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt, who is continuing her recovery from a calf injury. —*PTI*

Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana -*PTI*

PATIDAR A CALM LEADER

We have got several players contributing to RCB: Mo Bobat

DHARAMSALA, 27 MAY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru director of cricket Mo Bobat on Wednesday credited the franchise's "collective contributions" and fearless identity after the defending champions thrashed Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 1 to storm into a second successive IPL final.

RCB, who piled up a massive 254 for five before bundling out GT for 162, were powered by skipper Rajat Patidar's blistering unbeaten 93 off 33 balls and an all-round bowling effort on Tuesday. Bobat said the biggest takeaway from RCB's dominant run over the last two seasons was the number of players stepping up consistently in pressure situations.

"I think any team that's got the captain playing well, it fills them with even greater confidence. He's leading by example."Calling Patidar a calm leader.

Patidar ignites India T20 call-up debate

It was in Dharamsala a couple of years ago that injury and poor form forced Rajat Patidar out of the India setup for the foreseeable future. His horror run, including six dismissals in three games to England spinners, in March 2024, came in the traditional whites before he was replaced by Devdutt Padikkal for the final Test at the HPCA Stadium. Albeit in an incomparable format, Patidar chose the same picturesque Dhauladhar backdrop to ignite a debate on his national comeback with a T20 blitz that powered RCB to their second successive final. With Patidar on course to lead RCB to a back-to-back title as captain in his best-ever IPL season with the bat, calls for his inclusion in India's T20 squad had already begun. After a 33-ball 93, it has grown multifold. —*PTI*

Esha breaks World Record in women's 25m pistol shooting

MUNICH, 27 MAY

India's Esha Singh broke the World Record in the women's 25m pistol shooting event at the ISSF World Cup in Munich on Wednesday. The 21-year-old earned 43 points (from a possible 50) to surpass the record held by South Korea's Kim Ye-ji (42) and claim the gold medal. Esha started with three perfect sets, hitting the target with all 15 of her efforts to take an early lead. She maintained the edge through the final to seal the title and the record. "Munich meant a lot to me. Everyone in the sport knows the level of competition there, especially in pistol. It is very, very tough—*PTI*

Harmanpreet returns to lead India in FIH Pro League's European leg

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Captain and ace drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh on Wednesday returned to lead a 24-member Indian men's hockey squad for the European leg of next month's FIH Pro League, which will be a crucial preparatory competition ahead of the World Cup in August.

Harmanpreet had missed the Hobart leg of the Pro League in February, citing personal reasons. The Indians will first travel to Brussels for training and a friendly match from 7 to 9 June. Following this short camp, the squad will be in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, from June 10 for the Pro League matches against Germany and the Netherlands scheduled for 14 to 21 June. Thereafter, the Indian team will fly to London, where it will face Pakistan and England in the Pro League from June 23 to 28.

The squad features a blend of seasoned veterans and young talent to solidify the core team heading into the World Cup, which begins 15 August.

India's captain and leader of the defence, Harmanpreet, will be backed by a robust unit comprising Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh and young defender Amandeep Lakra.

The midfield will be anchored by the experienced duo of Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh and Vivek Sagar Prasad, besides Raj Kumar Pal. The forward line features explosive attackers, including Mandeep Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek and Selvam Karthi. Goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak, forwards Araijeet Singh Hundal and Maninder Singh, defender Poovanna Chandura Boby and midfielder Vishnu Kant Singh have been named as standbys. —*PTI*

Sports cut from Brisbane Games could return: Kirsty

LAUSANNE, 27 MAY

Sports and medal events cut from the 2032 Brisbane Olympics program will have a path to return at future Summer Games, IOC president Kirsty Coventry told sports leaders on Wednesday. Coventry's reassurance to the annual meeting of Summer Games sports bodies came after she warned in February of "uncomfortable" talks ahead to make future Olympic hosting more efficient.

The International Olympic Committee aims to finalise within months the list of sports on the Brisbane program that Coventry previously told their leaders will be fewer than the 36 being played at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"The cost and complexity come when you start adding additional venues for single-purpose events," Coventry told the AP. —*PTI*

FRENCH OPEN 2026

Svitolina cruises into 3rd round

PARIS, 27 MAY

Elina Svitolina put in a more assured display in the French Open second round than in her opening match, seeing off Spanish qualifier Kaitlin Quevedo in straight sets on Wednesday.

Svitolina, who beat Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff en route to the Italian Open title earlier this month, defeated world number 126 Kaitlin Quevedo 6-0, 6-4. "It was a great match, I started very well in the first set," she said.

Jannik Sinner Starts Campaign With Comfortable win

Jannik Sinner began his French Open 2026 campaign with a commanding straight-sets victory over France's Clement Tabur on Wednesday. The world No. 1 defeated Tabur 6-1, 6-3, 6-4 in the first round.

In their first meeting, Sinner dominated from the baseline, hitting 40 winners and not facing a single break point, according to the ATP website. The four-time Grand Slam champion will meet Juan Manuel Cerundolo in the second round, after Cerundolo overcame Jacob Fearnley 6-2, 7-6(0), 7-6(7).

Swiatek overcomes serve issues to best Bejlek

Iga Swiatek struggled on serve at times, but continued her fine start to the French Open with a straight-sets win in the second round over Sara Bejlek on Wednesday.

Having spent just an hour in the court in her opening match, Swiatek was put to a sterner test by Bejlek, though the Pole prevailed 6-2, 6-3 in 94 minutes.

Though Swiatek got the first break to take a 2-0 lead, the pair failed to hold serve in the opening stages, though the four-time Roland-Garros champion soon found her footing with a three-game winning streak. She failed to serve out the first set at 5-2 up, and it took her four set points to get over the line with a fourth break of the match. The second followed a similar pattern, with Swiatek going 2-0 up before trading breaks with a spirited Bejlek. —*PTI*

West Ham sticks with Nuno Espirito Santo as manager

LONDON, 27 MAY

West Ham United has decided to keep manager Nuno Espirito Santo in charge of the London side despite their relegation from the Premier League on the final day of the season, the club said on Wednesday. West Ham finished 18th in the standings to drop down to the second-tier Championship for the first time since 2011. "While the ultimate outcome on Sunday was a painful one, the Board of Directors believe that there have been broader signs of improvement and progress in recent months, and we want Nuno to continue developing that progress," the club said in a statement.—*PTI*

Giant Messi statue in Kolkata to be removed

KOLKATA, 27 MAY

A giant statue of football superstar Lionel Messi erected in India to mark his visit last year is "swaying in the wind" and will be removed, a lawmaker told AFP on Wednesday. Workers have scrambled up the 21-metre (70-foot) golden-coloured statue in the eastern city of Kolkata in West Bengal, throwing ropes around its shoulders to secure it. The sculpture showing the 38-year-old Argentina and Inter Miami star raising the World Cup trophy was unveiled during Messi's so-called GOAT Tour of India in December.—*PTI*

NO LEAGUE GOALS IS NO WC WORRY FOR SKIPPER SON

NEW YORK, 27 MAY

South Korea captain Son Heung-min is unconcerned by his lack of goals in this Major League Soccer (MLS) season and believes he will find the net at the World Cup if he puts his team first.

The 33-year-old forward, once one of the most prolific goal scorers in England at Tottenham Hotspur, has yet to hit the mark for Los Angeles FC in the league so far this season."A lot of people are worried, but I'm only worried if I am not playing well. I don't think that's the case now," Son told the Yonhap News Agency after joining up with the South Korea squad at its Utah base."Physically, I am feeling great.

But in other interviews, I joked that I was probably saving goals for the World Cup."Son has scored 54 goals in 142 appearances for his country, including three over his three previous World Cup campaigns.One more in this year's tournament would make him South Korea's record scorer at football's global showpiece, but Son said the last thing on his mind was individual targets."If I put the team above all else and worry about how I can best help the team first, then goals. —*PTI*

Norway Chess: Gukesh, Pragg have an awful day

OSLO, 27 MAY

D Gukesh ran out of steam and surrendered to Wesley So in Armageddon after failing to convert his classical promise, while red-hot Frenchman Alireza Firouzja tore past R Praggnanandhaa to storm to the top on a bruising second day for the Indians at Norway Chess here.

Defending champion Magnus Carlsen was pushed to the brink yet again by German sensation Vincent Keymer before the seven-time champion finally escaped with an Armageddon victory, clawing his way to his first points of the tournament after another fierce battle.

Despite the disappointing second-round Armageddon result, Gukesh stayed joint second with So on 2.5 points, while the rampant Firouzja opened up a commanding lead with six points after back-to-back wins.

Praggnanandhaa and Carlsen, meanwhile, languished at the bottom with 1.5 points each in the prestigious event.

To make matters worse for Gukesh, who will turn 20 in a couple of days, So bluntly remarked after the game that he was "not quite sure" the Indian was as strong as his rating suggested.

Gukesh, visibly shaken by the Armageddon defeat, tried to put up a brave face during his mandatory broadcast duties, but the frustration was hard to miss when he walked away with anger and disappointment written all over his face.

In the marathon classical battle lasting 116 moves, it was Gukesh who did most of the pressing and appeared to be cruising towards the winning line before So somehow escaped with a draw.

The American then completely outplayed the Indian in Armageddon, claiming 1.5 points to Gukesh's one and handing the world champion a crushing disappointment. Praggnanandhaa appeared to be following a promising winning path against Firouzja early on, but the battered Frenchman hobbling around in a moon boot. —*PTI*

PRANNOY STUNS CHRISTIE IN SINGAPORE OPEN

SINGAPORE, 27 MAY

Star Indian shuttler HS Prannoy notched a stunning three-game win over fifth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia to advance to the men's singles second round at the Singapore Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

The 33-year-old Indian, a 2023 World Championships and Asian Games bronze medallist, produced a composed performance to prevail 10-21 21-12 21-18 over the world No. 5 Indonesian in just over an hour.

It was his first win over Christie in five years, having last defeated him at the 2021 Indonesia Open.

Prannoy, who played epic roles in India's 2022 Thomas Cup triumph and the recent bronze medal win in Denmark, will face Singapore's former world champion Loh Kean Yew next.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also progressed to the second round after beating Malaysia's Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien 21-14, 20-22, 21-13 in their opening match. However, Kidambi Srikanth and Malvika Bansod couldn't cross the opening hurdle. —*PTI*

INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SHOOTING SPORTS

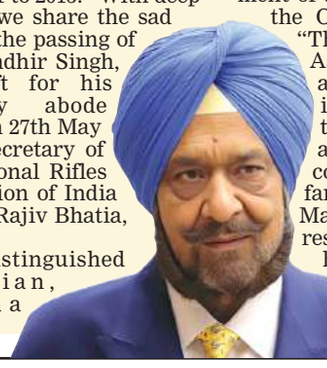
Sports administrator Randhir Singh passes away

NEW DELHI, 27 MAY

Veteran sports administrator and India's first shooting gold-medallist in the Asian Games, Randhir Singh, died here on Wednesday after battling age-related ailments, marking the end of an era in the country's sporting landscape on which he left an indelible mark in varied roles.

Singh was 79 and had undergone hospitalisation for several days before breathing his last at his residence here. He is survived by his wife, Vinita, and three daughters Mahima, Sunaina, and Rajeshwari, who is also a shooter. Singh recently quit his position as the President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) due to health issues. He was elected for a four-year term in 2024, having already served the body as Secretary General from 1991 to 2015. "With deep sorrow, we share the sad news of the passing of Raja Randhir Singh, who left for his heavenly abode today, on 27th May 2026," Secretary of the National Rifles Association of India (NRAI), Rajiv Bhatia, stated.

"A distinguished Olympian, Arjuna Awardee, and one of the most respected sports administrators in India, Asia, and the International Olympic Committee, Raja Randhir Singh, made invaluable contributions to the development of shooting sports and the Olympic movement.

"The National Rifle Association of India and the entire shooting fraternity mourn this irreparable loss and extend heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. May his noble soul rest in eternal peace," he added.

Singh's stellar sporting career included five Olympic appearances and the historic trap gold at the 1978 Bangkok Asian Games, which earned him the Arjuna Award in 1979. His Olympic appearances came in Tokyo 1964 (Reserve Shooter), Mexico 1968, Munich 1972, Montreal 1976, Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984. In his equally successful administrative career, he served as the Secretary General of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) from 1987 to 2010 and was also a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in different capacities from 2001 to 2014. —*PTI*